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ABSTRACT

THE ABOLISHMENT AND FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW IN
THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE TRY OF A HARMONIC
READING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT
TEACHINGS REGARDING
THE LAW

by

David Hans Bernhard Harms

Adviser: Laurențiu F. Moț

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

Thesis

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE ABOLISHMENT AND FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW IN THE NEW TESTAMENT: THE TRY OF A HARMONIC READING OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS REGARDING THE LAW

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Problem

A central issue in the covenant theology is the change in the law between the OT and the NT. Interpretations vary between the widely spread belief that the entire law has been abolished, up to the belief that the Jewish festivals should still be an obligation for each follower of Christ. The result of investigations regarding the changes in the law depends mainly on underlying presuppositions and different hermeneutical approaches.

Method

This study is based on three basic principles: (a) the acceptance of Christ as the Lawgiver and central Teacher of the law in the OT and the NT; (b) the belief in the inner harmony of the Bible; and (c) the Bible explains itself, moving from simple to complex.

These principles are systematically applied on the Biblical books in regard to their approximate time in history. In doing so, the main chapter is divided into three sections. The first section investigates the fulfillment of the law: beginning with Christ's utterances, followed by His disciples' approach and finally, by James's interpretation. The principles drawn from this section form the foundation for the following sections. The second section carefully examines Paul's understanding of the fulfillment of the law. The third section deals with the fulfillment in Hebrews, which includes a brief connection between the principles of fulfillment and the covenant theology. The most noteworthy scholarly approaches will partially be discussed in the footnotes when fundamental issues in critical passages are addressed.

Results

Since the ascension of Christ, the fulfillment of law has been discussed. While the apostles' counsel gained unity in their understanding, the latter church failed to do so. The variety of approaches increased with a growing number of presuppositions and hermeneutical approaches. This study indicates that a major reason for many contradictions is the neglect of the Sola Scriptura principles of inner harmony and interpretation while the consequent application of such reveals a harmonious NT teaching of the law's fulfillment.

Conclusions

This study excavated the three basic principles of the law's fulfillment in the NT: First, the Bible differentiates the eternal law of God from the temporal, Mosaic law. Second, fulfillment is not equal to removal, but an increase of the prior standards. Third, fulfillment encloses a shift from earthly to heavenly, from literal to spiritual.

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

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A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

David Hans Bernhard Harms

2018

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NT New Testament

OT Old Testament

To the glory of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Topic

The Jews love God's law. The law is the center of their teaching and thought. Christians believe that the Jewish Scripture Old Testament (OT) is a God-given and authoritative source. A few Christian groups keep many OT laws; some of them even keep the festivals while others do not have a desire and love for the law of the Lord because they regard it as a burden. Some Christians believe that the OT law has been abolished by Christ. Others recognize the law in the New Testament (NT) as written in the heart, which is often explained as the new law of Christ, thereby replacing the previously written code with a sort of inner spiritual guidance. A common belief is that the OT laws are replaced by a spiritual law in the heart and are therefore not valid as a corpus anymore. This approach is based on the plain NT teachings on certain OT laws, which found their fulfillment in Christ and their practice thus came to an end. Nevertheless, there are many other laws in the OT which are not kept by most Christians while the direct link to their fulfillment in Christ seems vague or missing. Christ addressed the issue of the law in Matt 5:17 by saying that He did not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it.

Problem

Since the law has been the center of the OT, questions regarding the NT interpretations of such arise. One Question this study attempts to answer is: What general principles regarding the fulfillment of the OT law in Christ does the NT reveal?

Jesus taught much about the law. His probably best known and first mentioned public speech—the Sermon on the Mount—centrally addressed the law and its right understanding. The famous and controversially discussed part of it is Matt 5:17, 19. Jesus says that He did not come to abolish/destroy the law, but that He came to fulfill the law and the prophets. He continues to explain that nobody should ever take away even the smallest part of the law. The first problem appears directly after the section in which Christ talks about divorce. In Matt 5:31, He refers to the Mosaic law on divorce (Deut 24:1-4) and continues that these regulations are not valid anymore. According to Jesus, nobody is allowed to divorce his wife except if the cause is fornication. It seems that He abolished that part of the law.

Divorce is just the beginning of changes which took place between the Jewish and Christian approaches regarding the law. Nobody, neither Christians nor Jews, needs to sacrifice anymore. The sacrifices have been fulfilled in Christ, but what is with all the social and moral laws in the OT? For instance, in the instructed stoning of a stubborn and rebellious son in Deut 21:18-23, has this law been fulfilled, abolished, or is it still valid? What does it mean when the NT says that something has been fulfilled in Christ? What is the difference between fulfillment and abolishment?

Purpose

The issue of the law in the NT is often consulted through in-depth studies of a few central verses or chapters. Even though such in depth studies are necessary and of great importance their outcome will be strongly influenced by the researcher's presuppositions about the law and its fulfillment. The more underlying presuppositions, the heavier their impact on the direction and result of the study. This study will also rely on presuppositions as well, but it will keep them as basic and general as possible. Only a few, in the Protestant world widely accepted, beliefs underlay its investigations. Based on those the study's purpose is to develop the presuppositional framework for any further investigations on the law. Its purpose is to achieve an understanding about general NT principles regarding the interpretation of the law's fulfillment. The study desires to prepare a wholesome, Sola Scriptura based, chronological and systematic Bible investigation on the topic, by which foundational principles can be excavated. It will approach the NT's teachings on the law systematically as a harmonic unit with a coherent message in order to first observe the broader picture the NT presents on the fulfillment of the law, and secondly to focus on probable links between the different NT utterances about the law. The Bible principles regarding the interpretation of the law will be discovered through a developing comparison of Scriptural texts, one laying the foundation and the correction for others which follow.

By doing so, extended by the presupposition of harmony within the text, this approach underlies an ongoing correction within its investigations. Many interpretations are thus excluded by the large context of the topic in which they are linked. Interpretations are sorted out and corrected within the Bible investigation until a holistic view on the topic is developed. This study aims to achieve NT principles on how the OT

laws are to be approached. It will connect all the major NT utterances regarding the abolishment and fulfillment of the law, to bring them in line, if possible. The studies purpose is to provide the framework for further and deeper exegetical investigations of small passages about the law.

Limitations

It is not possible to provide an exegetical approach on each ‘difficult’ text that is somehow related to this study. Exegetical investigations on ‘detailed’ textual issues are generally not part of this study. The study is limited to bring all the important texts related to the law. Its scope is to logically interrelate the Biblical utterances on the subject. Furthermore, the study focuses on the NT. The OT is only regarded if it is urgently required to understand a text or to present examples. The thesis will provide principles that the NT reveals about the fulfillment of the law. It does not include additional investigations on divisions of the OT law in moral and ceremonial law and will not explicitly answer how each part of the OT laws has to be approached. Its scope is only to provide the basic assessments needed to achieve a general understanding on how the OT wants to be read as suggested by the NT.

Furthermore, the study does in most cases not take into consideration whether the mentioned fulfillment in a section refers to the moral-, ceremonial-, social-law, or the 10 Commandments. To ask for the exact part of the OT, which may be addressed in a NT-fulfillment passage is in most cases not necessary to achieve the studies aim, which is the excavation of general principles of the laws fulfillment in Christ. Since Christ pointed to

the entire OT as being fulfilled in him,¹ general principles of fulfillment can be achieved from each passage which refers to it. The question which part of the OT a passage addresses in its use of fulfillment is of importance when it comes to further exegetical studies of single passages. Such would go beyond the scope of this research.

Presuppositions

The main presupposition is that the NT is a harmonic corpus as far as its theme is concerned. Jesus is the One who said about the law that it cannot be abolished. In like manner, He is the One who taught Paul the Gospel in a revelation (Gal 1:12). It is most unlikely that God is contradicting Himself, which leads to another presupposition: the presupposition of faith.

The presupposition of faith contains the conviction that the Bible has been revealed by God to different individuals who wrote them down in their own languages but without error in the deliverance of the message. It also contains the faith that God watched over the text in its transmission and preservation throughout the ages. This does not refer to the inerrancy of every single letter of the text, but it is faith in the protection of the message that God wanted to provide. This means that God is the original Author of the Bible. He presented His message to His elected messengers. The messengers delivered the message to the world. However, even though they used their own languages, it still did not make them the original Author of the text. This assumption directs this study to ask for the Author's intention which may be different from that of the

¹ In Matt 5:17 Jesus addresses the fulfillment in himself. Most scholars agree that his expression: "the Law and the Prophets" refers to the entire OT. See Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. 4: L - n, Reprinted January 1983. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), sec. νόμος; D: The Law in the New Testament. "Normally νόμος means the Pent. For the whole of Scripture we find ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται (Mt. 5:17; 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Lk. 16:16; 24:44 [also ψαλμοί])."

critical Bible researcher. The faith that God is the main Author asks primarily for His intention behind the message, rather than the deliverer's impact. The deliverer is regarded as a messenger and not as the actual author of the text. Since God is regarded as the true Author of all the Biblical books, the intention of His message can only be achieved if passages are compared with the other parts of the Bible. The presuppositions of this study lead to a Sola Scriptura-driven understanding of Biblical exegesis: the Bible is its own interpreter.²

Methodology

Based on the prior mentioned Sola Scriptura-driven tools of the Bible investigations, the main block of this study will be divided into three main sections. Each section deals with different Biblical authors, moving from simple to complex, and approximately from the early to the later writings. In the main block after the introduction of this study, a systematic inner Biblical research will be done. In it, an investigation of each book of the NT, which is important to the topic, will be done.

The first section contains the Gospels, Acts, and the letter of the Apostle James, who had a major impact on the Jerusalem council's decision regarding the fulfillment of the law. Fundamental principles will be drawn from this block, beginning with Jesus's teachings and moving over the general approach in Acts to James. Each preceding group will be based on the prior group. The second section investigates the most important Pauline letters discussing the fulfillment of the law. Based on prior excavated principles,

² For further information about the authors' understanding of the interpretation and approach of the Bible, see Richard M. Davidson, "Interpreting Scripture According to the Scriptures: Toward an Understanding of Seventh-Day Adventist Hermeneutics" (Biblical Research Institute - Andrews University, 21.05 2003), accessed March 30, 2018, <https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/interp%20scripture%20davidson.pdf>.

it will interrelate and connect the Pauline messages with the earlier investigations. In the third and last section, the book of Hebrews will be briefly observed in its presented link between the fulfillment of the laws and the covenantal changes between the OT and the NT. The study for each block is determined by looking for a possible harmonic understanding of the text regarding the fulfillment of the law. Christ's teachings on abolishment and fulfillment form the basis of that method.³ After the main chapter, a final conclusion will be given. It will summarize the achieved NT principles regarding the NT's interpretation and application of the OT law.

Keywords

In order to achieve an understanding of abolishment and fulfillment, the Greek terms of those two words need to be examined for their general use and meaning.

The Word 'To Abolish' in the New Testament

The Greek word for 'to abolish' in Matt 5:17 is *katalu,w*. The form is used in less than 20 verses in the NT. It is a composite which strengthens the meaning of the simple form *lu,w*, which means 'to resolve, to remove or to loosen.' The stronger form *katalu,w* is used as 'to destroy, to break down, to be overthrown, to dissolve or to abolish.' Biblically, it can also refer 'to break up a journey' which would basically mean 'to stay somewhere overnight.' The most common is the use 'to destroy something' (e.g., Matt

³ This study regards Christ as the Beginning and the Center of the gospel and follows, therefore, a similar approach, to what Meyer expresses the following: The "recognition that Christian behavior will 'fulfill' the law even though the Christian believer is not under the law requires a different starting point for the discussion. I propose that one should begin with Christ and not with the individual Mosaic commands. The coming of Christ has caused a paradigm shift that calls for recalibrating all former commands in the light of His centrality." Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 283.

26:61). It stands for a total break up or removal of something, including the destruction/abolishment of the law (Matt 5:17).⁴

The Word 'To Fulfill' in the New Testament

The word used in Matt 5:17 for 'to fulfill' is *plhro,w*. The Bible mainly use it in two ways. First, it is used to address things which have been promised and happened the way they were promised. The promise is kept and the things are finished as it was foretold. Second, it is used to refer to something, which is being filled until it reaches the point of being absolutely full. An example of this use can be found in Matt 13:48 where the net of the fishermen is filled with the maximum load of fish. The word refers to a constant filling until something reaches its peak (for other examples, see Mark 1:15; Luke 24:44; John 3:29; Acts 13:52). This meaning is often used in connection with the OT prophecies pointing to Jesus. Some of them have been fulfilled partwise in the OT times, but found/will find their final fulfillment in Jesus Christ's first or second coming (see for example Cyrus in Isa 45:1).⁵

⁴ See Gerhard Friedrich and Gerhard Kittel, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Studienausgabe., vol. IV (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1990), 329; 339.

⁵ More details in Gerhard Friedrich and Gerhard Kittel, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Studienausgabe., vol. VI (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer GmbH, 1990), 289–296.

CHAPTER 2

ABOLISHMENT AND FULFILLMENT IN THE GOSPELS, ACTS, AND JAMES

This chapter comprises three main sections. The first section provides an investigation of the Gospels and the books of Acts and James. The second section discusses the approach on the most important letters of Paul regarding the law. The third section presents a brief study on the connection of the book of Hebrews with the fulfilled law and with the covenant. The study for each section is determined by looking for a possible congruence regarding the abolishment or fulfillment of the law in the text.

Jesus' Teachings About the Law in the Gospels

Fulfillment and Abolishment cannot mean the same.

The first time the word law is mentioned in the Gospels is in Matt 5:17. Jesus' Sermon on the Mount has a major emphasis on the issue of the law. Its passage in Matt 5:17-20 is considered as "one of the most difficult in the New Testament"¹ and the first big public sermon of Jesus as He began His ministry. The position, value, and timing in which He addresses the issue show that it was an issue of importance for Christ to present his standpoint towards the law to the Jewish community. However, even though He was

¹ Paul W. Walaskay, "Matthew 5: 17-20," *Interpretation* 56, no. 4 (2002): 1.

the Lawgiver,² some of His teachings would be against— at least in the Jewish understanding of —the law. Christ regarded it as necessary to clarify His position regarding the law at the beginning of His ministry. Therefore, He made the law the main topic of His most known teaching in front of a great multitude.³

Jesus proclaimed in Matt 5:17 that His commission is not and will never be the abolishment of the law.⁴ In 5:18, He continues that even until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest part of the law will come to an end. He refers most probably to the entire OT: The addition in the last part of the verse “till all be fulfilled” most likely refers to the first part of the verse and therefore to “the eschatological events at the end of the age” of times, rather than to “the accomplishment of the law [or] the fulfillment of the OT scriptures in the person and work of Christ.”⁵ The understanding that no part of the law or the prophets will ever be abolished is the one cornerstone of the ongoing study.

² Several scholars agree that Christ has been the lawgiver, meeting Moses at Mount Sinai. E.g. Reisinger, who concludes: "The Law of Moses is the Law of Christ." Ernest C. Reisinger, *The Law and the Gospel* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing Company, 1997), 26.

³ “The ethical teaching of Jesus that follows in this sermon, as well as later in the Gospel, has such a radical character and goes so much against what was the commonly accepted understanding of the commands of the Torah that it is necessary at the outset to indicate Jesus full and unswerving loyalty to the law. Only when this is set clearly before the listeners or readers will they be in a position to understand correctly Jesus teaching about the righteousness of the kingdom.” Donald A. Hagner et al., *Matthew 1 - 13*, Word Biblical Commentary [general ed.: Bruce M. Metzger; David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament ed.: Ralph P. Martin]; Vol. 33,A (Nashville, TN: Word Books, Publisher, 1993), 103.

⁴ White explains regarding the abolishment and fulfillment in Matt 5:17: “It was to atone for man’s transgression of the law that Christ laid down His life. Could the law have been changed or set aside, then Christ need not have died. By His life on earth He honored the law of God. By His death He established it. He gave His life as a sacrifice, not to destroy God’s law, not to create a lower standard, but that justice might be maintained, that the law might be shown to be immutable, that it might stand fast forever.” Ellen Gould Harmon White, *Christ’s Object Lessons* (Battle Creek, MI: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1900), 314.

⁵ Robert J Banks, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93, no. 2 (June 1974): 235.

The second time Jesus mentioned the law is in Matt 5:17 when He said that He came to fulfill the law. By placing the fulfillment next to the abolishment, He ensures that these things are not the same. If He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it; His understanding of fulfillment needs to be clarified. As mentioned in the introduction, fulfillment addresses either the achievement of a certain point that has to be reached, or it refers to the constant filling of something until it arrives at its peak.

Development as one Form of Fulfillment

Jesus continues His speech by heightening the issue of divorce, which had been allowed if a man found some indecency in his wife (Deut 24:1-4). With his proclamation that a man cannot divorce without breaking the marriage, “saving for the cause of fornication”. “Jesus prohibits something which the OT allows. The question, though, is whether or not Jesus is contradicting the commanding aspect of the OT.”⁶ According to Neil J. McEleney, “For Matthew, as for any Jew of the period, the law remained even while it changed. Viewed in this light, vv 18-19 are not really in conflict with whatever legal modifications Jesus may have introduced in the antitheses, though in fact, only the assertion ruling out divorce seems to be a legal modification.”⁷

⁶ Brice L. Martin, “Matthew on Christ and the Law,” *Theological Studies* 44, no. 1 (1983): 54–55. Martin goes on to clarify about the OT regulations on divorce: “In the beginning (19:8) God willed that there be no divorce (19:4-5). Moses accepts the validity of Gen 2:24 but makes a concession (Deut 24:1) because of the hardness of men’s hearts. What is commanded (Deut 24:1) is not divorce but the giving of a certificate of divorce; this is better than no certificate of divorce. In the case of divorce (19:1-9; 5:31-32) Jesus does not take away from the OT but adds to it. 12 The commands of Jesus are an interpretation of, and an advancement upon, the OT: his commands are an expression of the pure will of God, an expression at which the OT aimed.”

⁷ Neil J. McEleney, “The Principles of the Sermon on the Mount,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1979): 559. Albright adds to that thought, explaining why Jesus is so entirely strict when it comes to marriage: He simply lifts the principle of marriage to its original state: “What Jesus is emphasizing is the principle, the foundation, of marriage. In principle, the divorced woman is still the wife of her husband, and the man who divorces his wife makes her an adulteress, on the presumption that she will marry again. The man who marries the divorced woman both shares in her adultery and also commits that offense himself,

Since Jesus's teaching on the Mount changes in the regulations for a divorcee belongs to the category of fulfillment, Jesus did not abolish but lifted the standard of the previous laws and fulfilled them. Samuel Bolton explains that "He was the end of the law, as the apostle speaks in Rom. 10.4, but we must understand this to mean 'the perfecting and consummating end,' not 'the destroying and abolishing end' of the law. In Christ, the law had an end of perfection and consummation, not of destruction and abolition."⁸ In this connection, fulfillment cannot be regarded as the same with abolishment. Abolishment would be a removal, but Jesus's teaching was built on the principles of the previous law and extended the practical implementation. For Peter G. Nelson, "The laws he abrogated he abrogated by raising them, not destroying them."⁹

The following summary of the prior explanation serves as the first fundamental principle of this study: *The law can be changed, but not abolished*. This means that the previous laws can be morally developed but a standard law cannot decrease. The underlying principle must remain and the practical implementation can change.¹⁰

According to Leander E. Keck, Jesus's demand goes even "beyond what the law of an

because in principle-though not legally-the divorced woman is still married to her first husband." W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew - Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 65.

⁸ See Samuel Bolton, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, First Banner of Truth Trust edition. (London: Billing and Sons, 1964), 61.

⁹ Peter G. Nelson, "Christian Morality: Jesus' Teaching on the Law," *Themelios* 32, no. 1 (2006): 4.

¹⁰ "This messianic fulfillment does not nullify or make obsolete the Law and the Prophets but confirms them. The incorporation of the Law in the more comprehensive history of salvation centered in the Christ-event is an affirmation of the Law, not its rejection. 8...] But this affirmation, by being fulfilled by Christ, does not always mean a mere repetition or continuation of the original Law. Fulfillment may mean transcendence as well (cf. 12:1-14)" Leander E. Keck, ed., *General Articles on the New Testament: The Gospel of Matthew; the Gospel of Mark*, The New Interpreter's Bible 8 (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 186.

earthly society can reasonably condemn to proscribe behavior incompatible with the goodness required of God's children. The law is not abolished; it is transcended."¹¹

Jesus summarizes His understanding of development in 7:12 with the words: "whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: For this is the law and the prophets."¹² It seems that referring to fulfillment, Jesus talks about the right motivation through which every law need to be interpreted. It is the principle of love, longsuffering, patience, grace, and several other 'fruits of the Spirit.'¹³

Fulfillment as Correction of Misunderstandings

In Matt 12:1-8, it seems as if Christ Himself crosses the law that He earlier proclaimed to be unchangeable. Nevertheless, it would be too easy to see a contradiction in His behavior and utterances before proving if Matt 12:1-8 could be in harmony with what He taught earlier.

Matt 12:1-7 interrelates with v 8. The core issue between the different understanding of this passage results from a different understanding of Christ, telling that He is the Lord of the Sabbath and therefore the Lord of the entire law. The understanding of Matt 12:8 impacts the interpretation of Matt 12:1-7 and vice versa.

Jesus did not point to any abolishment of the Sabbath when stated that He is the Lord of the Sabbath. That interpretation of His words would stand in direct contradiction

¹¹ Stephen Westerholm, "The Law in the Sermon on the Mount: Matt 5: 17-48," *Criswell Theological Review* 6, no. 1 (1992): 53.

¹² The translation used throughout the entire study is the *King James Version: Standardized 1769 Text with Strong's*, 1611.

¹³ A well thought through, explanation of Matt 5:17-19 is found in Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged* (Grand Rapids, MI: Guardian Press, 1976), 32-33.

to His previous teaching in Matt 5:17 and the context. Most probably He referred to Matt 12 as the same system of fulfillment that He already introduced in the Sermon on the Mount: He fulfilled the law in a sense that He lifts it up and corrects misunderstanding.¹⁴ The principle of harmonic reading allows only one conclusion in regard to Matt 12:8. Christ's purpose in this text is not to abolish the Sabbath law but to correct misleading ideas about Sabbath keeping.

Understanding Matt 12:8 in the context of Christ's earlier teachings leads to the following understanding of the prior seven verses. The OT does not explicitly forbid somebody else than the priest to eat from the showbread. Lev 24:5-9 explains that God has intended the showbread to be eaten by the priest, but nothing is mentioned about a possible consequence if the bread would be offered to a beggar in times of need. The OT is also not referring to the service of the Priests on Sabbath as sin.¹⁵

The further context gives some more clarification. Christ's disciples, who have been hungry, plucked some wheat. Some Pharisees saw that and claimed that the disciple's behavior is not lawful. Since Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath, as He is the Lord over the entire law,¹⁶ He knows best—what the Sabbath law is about and how the

¹⁴ See Hager on Jesus and the law: "Jesus corrections of the mistaken understandings involve the presentation of the true meaning of the Torah, not its cancellation as might at first seem to be the case." Hagner et al., *Matthew 1 - 13*, 103.

¹⁵ Davies explains this connection between priest's service and the disciple's activity the following: "why does their [the priests] action justify the disciples? First, the priests prove that Scripture allows at least one exception to the general Sabbath rule. Secondly, since the violation of the Sabbath is done for the sake of the temple, this shows observance; if then there is something which is greater than the temple (as 12.6 asserts), it follows that it too may take precedence over observing the Sabbath." William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. II, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2001), 314.

¹⁶ Rodriguez defines the phrase 'being Lord of the Sabbath [law]' the following: "Jesus is 'Lord even of the Sabbath,' that is to say it is he who determines how the Sabbath is to be kept. [...] The statement 'not only affirms the authority of Jesus, the Son of man, to reinterpret Sabbath law, but asserts

Sabbath should be kept. If His disciples would have transgressed the law by their behavior, Christ could not have tolerated it since He said earlier that He did not abolish a single letter of the law and the prophets.¹⁷ Either He lied or He as the lawgiver regarded no transgression in the deed of David or of His disciples.

The text presents Christ revealing to the Pharisees His Lordship over the law. Matt 12:5 shows that Christ did not try to abolish the law. He connects Matt 12:4 with Matt 12:5 through the word “or” that shows that Christ presents a chain of two arguments which belong together. His conclusion at the end of Matt 12:5 is that David and the priests transgressed the law but remained without sin.

Jesus wanted to show examples of people who seemingly transgressed the law but actually did not. The interpretation that they transgressed the law results from a misunderstanding of it. Christ presents these examples to make sure that the Pharisees’ approach on Sabbath observance and law and sin need to be rethought.

Christ is explaining the OT to the Pharisees. The utterance He did in Matt 5:17 finds confirmation in His argumentation in Matt 12:1-8. Christ presents Himself as the

also that the Sabbath remains God’s day. Designed for the welfare of men and women, the proper use of the Sabbath is determined by the Son of man. As a human figure, he best knows human needs; as a divine figure, he has the authority to say how the Lord’s day should be used.” Similar to this explanation of Christ as the Lord of the Sabbath is the explanation of Christ being the Lord of the Law. He has the authority to determine, what the law means and how it should be applied. Angel Manuel Rodriguez, “The Biblical Sabbath: The Adventist Perspective” (Biblical Research Institute General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2002), 9, accessed April 15, 2018, https://www.adventistbiblicalresearch.org/sites/default/files/pdf/Sabbath-Catholic_2002.pdf.

¹⁷ Evans adds to this thought, that Jesus and his disciples did not transgress the law since Jesus explanation should show the Pharisees that "it is the work of God" he is doing. He continues his argument by explaining that "it is not just that Jesus and his disciples are doing the work of God, that they may, as do the priests in the temple, do work on the Sabbath. Jesus work is 'something greater than the temple.'" Evans continues to argue that Jesus proofed to the Pharisees that they are erring in their understanding of the law. Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 250–251. similar, though more interpreted in favor of abolishment in Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary Volume 22 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 196–197.

Lord of the Law, who came to fulfill, not to abolish or to remove. These principles of Christ remain preserved. Matthew's Gospel seems in this sense well structured. In the words of Michael J. Cook, "By setting up the law of Moses as an institution to be respected, then Matthew can all the more aggrandize the law of Jesus which he espouses as being far superior to the law of Moses."¹⁸ In this way, Matthew prepared the ground for his argument in the 12th chapter.

The Foundation of the Entire Law of God is Love

In Matt 22:37-40, Jesus makes love a law. The Pharisees approach him with the question for the highest law. Jesus answers that the highest law is the love of the Lord and the second, to love the neighbor as yourself, is of similar importance. The answer of Christ is in absolutely no contradiction with His previous words but has to be observed in the light of the previous precepts. Herein, Jesus presents one of His main agendas in all His teachings. He taught to reestablish the knowledge of the principles of love hidden behind all the previous laws. Jesus quotes the OT text that has often been overread but reveals the intention behind the entire law.¹⁹ By pointing to the highest law, He is not replacing any other law but lifts them towards a deeper understanding in the light of the law of love. When Christ continues that "all the law and the prophets" hang on "these two commandments." He is ensuring the validity of the other laws since they hang on the

¹⁸ Michael J. Cook, "Interpreting 'Pro-Jewish' Passages in Matthew," *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1983): 143-144.

¹⁹ Williams regards this teaching of Christ as an indicator that the Bible and God's holy law want to be interpreted as a harmonious unity. He says that the fact that all of God's laws are based on the principle of law demonstrate "the unity and integrity of revelation." And show that its "Author is one; its design is uniform; it teaches one path, leading to one great end." H. D. M. Spence and Joseph S. Exell, eds., *Matthew*, vol. 15, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 366.

law of love and are therefore a subcategory and part of the highest law. There is no existing OT law that is not grounded in the law of love.²⁰

Christ shows that each law has its importance, but that the laws are of different value. For Matthew Thiessen, “The controversies with the scribes and the Pharisees provide Matthew with a platform to demonstrate that while Jesus may have differed from that of the Pharisees, he (and his followers) still faithfully observed the law.”²¹ In Matt 23:23, He addresses the Pharisees. His rebuke is not for the Pharisee’s tithe mint, anise, and cumin, but that they neglect the laws of higher value. Christ’s conclusion is that they should do the one, but do not leave the other. He also makes it clear that there is a certain hierarchy between the laws.²² Still, it remains that each should be done. By stating, “These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,” (Matt 23:23) Christ points to the value and validity of each little law given in the OT as He did in His previous speeches. As explained by Joshua Marshall Strahan, Jesus shows in this context

²⁰ “Jesus, in Matthew’s view, does not cancel the commandments of the law through his teaching concerning the critical importance of love but instead regards the latter as the true fulfillment of the heart of the former (cf. too, 9:13; 12:7; esp. 23:23).” Donald A. Hagner et al., *Matthew 14 - 28*, Word Biblical Commentary [general ed.: Bruce M. Metzger; David A. Hubbard; Glenn W. Barker. Old Testament ed.: John D. W. Watts. New Testament ed.: Ralph P. Martin]; Vol. 33,B (Nashville, TN: Word Books, Publisher, 1995), 648. Gerhardsson provides additional information, showing that Matt 22:37-40 is designed to be a “hermeneutic program”, through which the law can be rightly understood. Birger Gerhardsson, “The Hermeneutic Program in Matthew 22:37-40,” in *Jews, Greeks and Christians: Religious Cultures in Late Antiquity: Essays in Honor of William David Davies*, by W. William David Davies, Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly, and Robin Jerome Scroggs (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1976), 129–150.

²¹ Matthew Thiessen, “Abolishers of the Law in Early Judaism and Matthew 5,17-20,” *Biblica* 93, no. 4 (2012): 555.

²² This hierarchy is further explained by Davis in his commentary. He shows that Jesus had actually no problem with the tithing of the Pharisees but attacks and corrects the hierarchy of their values by which they make the law a burden. Exact “tithing is neither dismissed nor belittled but affirmed [...]. Tithing is not undone by the weightier matters of the law but subordinated to them.” William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. III, The international critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark LTD, 2000), 294–295.

and in several parables “how to interpret the law in a way that leads to life.”²³ Matthew’s report leaves no doubt that Christ did not abolish any law. In the following, his report will be supplemented by Mark’s, Luke’s and John’s explanations.

Christ’s Earthly Parents were People of the Law

Luke explains in the second chapter of his Gospel how Jesus’s parents lived their life in everything according to the law. They offered sacrifice “according to [...] the law” (Luke 2:24); he was circumcised “after the custom of the law” (Luke 2:27); Mary shall be called holy, like every mother “as it is written in the law of the Lord” (Luke 2:23-24); and they did a journey after they “performed all things according to the law of the Lord”²⁴ (Luke 2:39). Luke puts a special emphasis on the role of the law in the early ages of Christ. He presents that the early years of Christ have been dominated by His parent’s faithful observance of the law of the Lord. By presenting the righteousness of Jesus’s parents according to the Mosaic law, Luke shows “how living by specific commandments of the Thora is to be understood generously rather than narrowly, in ways that promote healthy and honest relationships within the community and beyond.”²⁵ The whole story

²³ Joshua Marshall Strahan, “Jesus Teaches Theological Interpretation of the Law: Reading the Good Samaritan in Its Literary Context,” *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 10, no. 1 (2016): 75.

²⁴ Garland shows how Luke relates the teaching of the law, in the story of Mary and Joseph (Luke 2,22-27), representing what has been given by God in the old covenant, with the Spirit, representing, what will come through Christ under the new covenant. “The obedience of Jesus family to the law is mentioned three times in this passage. The Holy Spirit is mentioned three times in directing Simeon’s meeting with the family, which is followed by his hymn of praise and prophecy. Luke goes out of his way to show the continuity between the old and the new – the law, prophecy, and the gospel. This narrative illustrates Paul’s statement: “But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship” (Gal 4:4-5).” David E. Garland, *Luke*, Zondervan exegetical commentary series on the New Testament volume 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 138.

²⁵ James L Bailey, “The Sermon on the Mount: Invitation to New Life,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 40, no. 6 (December 2013): 400.

of Jesus's parents gives witness to this positive outcome of law observance. It seems as if Luke, who is centrally addressing the Gentiles, wants to point out the importance of the law from the beginning of the Gospel.

In addition to what Matthew mentioned, Luke 24:44 quotes an utterance of Jesus that gives a little more clarification about the fulfillment of the law. Jesus says that everything written about Him in "the law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled" (Luke 24:44) Jesus addresses here another fulfillment of the law than the one in Matt 5. He is not referring to the real meaning and true understanding of the law, but to the fulfilled prophecies regarding His coming and His task.²⁶ Still, prophetic fulfillment could also mean that some things found their end in Him and are therefore not valid anymore.

The Law of Moses in Contradiction to the Truth and Grace in Christ

In the light of that fulfillment, John 1:17 has to be interpreted also: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." This utterance could lead to the conclusion that the law has been without grace and truth. That is not true at all. The law is full of grace and truth; otherwise, it could not point to Christ. The law gave the instruction that the highest law is "to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart" (Deut 11:13); the law tells that God gives grace (Ps 84:11); God gave mercy

²⁶ See Dillon about the fulfillment of the law in Luke 24: "Only when the resurrected Christ demonstrated the fulfillment of prophecy in himself did puzzled Easter onlookers become prospective Easter witnesses (Luke 24,45-48)." Richard J. Dillon, "Previewing Luke's Project from His Prologue (Luke 1:1-4)," *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1981): 215–216. Flusser adds the possible reason why Luke specifically adds to the expression "fulfillment of the law", the prophets and especially the Psalms. He shows that such contain most prophecies about Christ's coming and service which found their fulfillment, in many aspects of his life. It is therefore obvious that Luke is limiting the fulfillment to such aspects that specifically referred to his life and service on this earth. David Flusser, "Wie in Den Psalmen Über Mich Geschrieben Steht (Lk 24,44)," *Judaica* 48 (1992): 40–42.

and truth (Gen 24:27); and even the Ten Commandments refer to God's mercy that is shown to those who keep His covenant for 1,000 generations. That is, the people today still profit from Noah's righteousness. The OT is full of mercy and truth. According to George Braulik,

Both the Old and New Testaments contain law as well as gospel, even if not in the same proportion. To be sure, one is capable of fulfilling the law, yet not of justifying oneself by doing so. One's justification is, instead, solely the work of the gospel, that is, God's work of grace. Law and gospel, then, constitute not only theological but also anthropological categories. Accordingly, human existence perceived as law denotes self-redemption; whereas, seen as gospel, it refers to redemption by God.²⁷

Thus, what is John referring to? Even though the law is full of grace and truth, it is not grace and truth in itself but points to Christ, the living truth and grace.²⁸ The word became flesh and dwelt among them and He reflected the glory of God, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). John is playing with "the word." This word is Jesus Christ Himself and it is the word that comes out of His mouth, through which He is directing the world (Heb 11:1-4) and through which He talked to the prophets. Ps 33:9 states, "For he spake, and it was done, he commanded, and it stood fast." Whatever He said, if it is the command to create the world or a prophecy given to the prophets, it will happen. This word, full of love and grace, delivered through the writings of the prophets came in the form of the

²⁷ Georg Braulik, "Law as Gospel: Justification and Pardon According to the Deuteronomic Torah," *Union Seminary Review* 38, no. 1 (1984): 5.

²⁸ Borchert argues about many Christians reading of John 1:17: "Christians who have been brought up with a negative view of the law of Moses derived from a misreading of Paul and an unnecessary bifurcating of law and grace, the temptation is to read this verse as a negative slap of the law. But such is hardly the intention of the evangelist. In the Gospel of John, Moses is regarded as a positive servant of God (e.g., 5:45-47; 6:32; 7:19-23). The problem for Jesus in this Gospel was not with Moses and the law; the problem was with the disobedient Jews who misused Moses and the law (e.g., 6:31-32; 9:28-29). Moses and the law were together viewed as a gracious gift from God." Gerald L. Borchert, *John 1-11*, The new American commentary volume 25A (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 123. A broader theological discussion on the passage of John 1:14-18 in relation to Moses and the law can be found in A. Hanson, "John i:14-18 and Exodus Xxxiv," *New Testament Studies* 23 (1976): 90-101; T. F. Glasson, *Moses in the Fourth Gospel* (Naperville, IL: A. Allenson, 1963), 24-30; 70-86; W. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Mosaic Traditions and Johannine Christology* (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1967).

person Jesus Christ into the world. Everything written in the law reflected the character of that coming Redeemer (John 5:39). The law itself was true because it was given by ‘the truth – Jesus Christ.’ In like manner, it has not been ‘the truth.’ It was just pointing to ‘the truth’ that would come. It was a foretaste of the grace that should be established in Christ. The text, therefore, does not say that there has been no truth and no grace in the law. There has been a lot of truth and grace in the OT law. The text in John 1 does not reject that, it simply says that “grace and truth *came* by Jesus Christ.” Grace and truth has been written about and experienced before, but only when the word became flesh (John 1:14) that it came in its living fulfillment; Christ the living word to whom the law and the prophets pointed (John 1:45), who as the word “was made flesh” and in whom the glory of God “full of grace and truth” could be observed as never before (John 1:14). John 1:17 is built on that presupposition.

This explanation is based on the context. The context does not refer to a discussion between the observance and the rule of the law and the grace that came through Christ, but the context talks about Christ who is the true Word and who came as the Word, to fulfill the law into this world. The broader context of Christ’s coming to fulfill cannot be flouted in any interpretation of John 1:17. The OT laws and regulations already reflected, foreshadowed, and presented that “God’s perfect straightness included mercy and hope because God had promised steadfast love.”²⁹

²⁹ Harvey Lange, “Greater Righteousness: Theological Reflections on Matthew 5:17-20,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 5, no. 2 (April 1978): 118. Klink summarizes his extensive investigation of John 1:17 the following: “The old covenant is as much grace as the new, but it is in the new covenant that grace is given its ultimate and final expression. [...] The Old Testament would be poorly interpreted if the old covenant was not inclusive of God’s grace. [...] Grace and truth are embodied in a person so that ‘this former manifestation of God’s gracious love and favor has been replaced by a new, personal, and unique manifestation through his Son.’” John “1:17, embracing the whole Gospel, so that the reader is invited to believe in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God, through whom the grace and truth promised in the old covenant were brought into ‘being’ (*egeneto*).” Edward W. Klink, *John: Zondervan Exegetical*

Circumcision as Transgression of the Sabbath

In John 7:19, Jesus gives another example of the law being “fulfilled” by Him. In that verse, He points out that none of the Jews keep the law. Why? He continues with His explanation in John 7:21-24. The Jews circumcise on the Sabbath day to keep the law of Moses. He uses this as an argument to prove that the Jews do not keep the Sabbath law, if circumcision was defined as a work. Finally, He connects the utterance with His healing activity on the Sabbath. He says in John 7:23, “If a man on the Sabbath day receive circumcision, that the law of Moses should not be broken; are ye angry at me because I have made a man every whit whole on the Sabbath day?” This argument makes it clear that neither the circumcision nor the healing is a transgression of the law.³⁰

Why then does He begin by stating that the Jews do not keep the law because of their circumcision practice? It is simple. Jesus picks up the Pharisees and Scribes’ interpretation of the law and shows them, that they do not keep the Sabbath law according to their own interpretation. In John 7:24, He clarifies, that neither the circumcision nor the healing on the Sabbath is a transgression of the law if the law is understood correctly. Jesus fulfills the law; He brings it back to its original meaning. The result was “a Jew who followed Jesus’ teachings and therefore experienced increasing

Commentary on the New Testament, Zondervan exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 116–117.

Additional, Jeremias regards John 1:17 as a presentation of harmonic progression from Moses to Jesus, standing "for the combination and yet also the contrast of Law and Gospel." Joachim Jeremias, “Maouions,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. 4: L - n*, by Gerhard Kittel, Reprinted January 1983. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), 873.

³⁰ Klink extends this thought the following: “To fulfill Biblical commandments, there were times when it was necessary to override other Biblical commandments. That is, according to the requirements of the law itself, some commandments were to take precedence over other commandments. Jesus offers the need for circumcision on the Sabbath as the prime example. [...] Jesus’s argument, therefore is a rebuke of the Jewish interpretation of the law. For the intention of Moses, made manifest in the precedence given to circumcision over the Sabbath, was to show that the law was ordained to life, and Jesus’s activity on the Sabbath was not breaking the law but fulfilling it.” Klink, *John*, 368.

tension with official Judaism.”³¹ Jewish Christians kept the law, but their understanding of it was entirely different than the traditional Jewish interpretation. Douglas J. Moo explains this as a historic law that “came into history at a specific point in time”³² and remained only for a specific time.

Jesus Disregards the Law

There is another strong argument which seems to contradict Christ’s claim that He did not abolish any law. God instructed Israel to use the death penalty as a common punishment for several transgressions of the law. One of the transgressions avenged by the death penalty is a married man or woman doing adultery. In this case, both of them should be killed by stoning (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22-24). In John 8, Jesus is confronted with a situation in which the Pharisees brought to Him a woman taken “in the very act” of adultery. The first question that appears to the reader who knows the OT might be: Where is the man? According to the OT regulations, both man and woman should be stoned. (Lev 20:10). However, Jesus does not ask this question. The Pharisees put the woman into the middle of the gathering and blame her for the act they caught her in. They did not judge her in the situation but brought her to Jesus. Why did they do so? John 8:6 says that the motivation has been to tempt Christ so that they might find a reason to accuse him. What kind of temptation that might give a reason to accuse him could that have been? Secondly, where did they want to accuse him?

³¹ F. P. Viljoen, “Jesus’ Teaching on the Torah in the Sermon on the Mount,” *Neotestamentica* 40, no. 1 (2006): 141.

³² Douglas J Moo, “The Law of Christ as the Fulfillment of the Law of Moses: A Modified Lutheran View,” in *Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian: Five Views* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 322.

John 7 shows that the leading Jews had the desire to kill Jesus; still, they were not able to do so since their territory was controlled by the Romans. The report on the crucifixion of Christ displays that the leading Jews did not have the authority to practice death penalty without the Romans' admission (John 18:31; 19:7). Trying to accuse somebody includes a higher power where Jesus can be accused. The higher power above the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees were the Roman governors set over Judah. Thus, the scribes and Pharisees tried to find a reason for which they could accuse Jesus in front of the Romans.

In regard to this context, the temptation that Jesus faced included a twofold problem: either He would set the woman free and abolish the OT law of which he said He would not abolish, or He would condemn the woman but give the Jews a reason for which they could accuse Him before the Romans. If it would have been Jesus's attempt to make the Jews understand that the law has been abolished, he would not have approved the law by saying that they should throw stones on her, with the condition that they prove their own heart and find it sinless. Opposite to abolishment, Jesus actually proved the validity of the law by that statement.³³ Consequently, nobody picked up stones; they just left instead.

Finally, Jesus is alone with the woman, presenting to her the fulfillment/original approach of the law. Many parts of the OT talk about the importance of righteous judging (e.g., Deut 16:1). Christ presents in John 8 that righteous judging is and has always been

³³ Klink also believes by proclaiming the following about the verse: "This is not a denial or rejection of the law, for the statement only demands that this single qualification is met 'first' (*prwtos*). It is, rather, a demand for the right – even perfect- execution of the law. This statement spoke past the legal maneuvering right into the heart of the scribes and Pharisees, who at that moment could not sidestep their own law or lawgiver." Klink, *John*, 394.

in connection with mercy and grace just as God judges humanity not according to their transgressions (Ps 103:10) but with longsuffering mercy. Jesus corrects a wrong understanding of the law and rebuked the unjust Pharisees in that scene. J. Daryl Charles asserts that “greater righteousness called for [and practiced] by Jesus does not stand in juxtaposition to the ethical standard enunciated in the law and the prophets.”³⁴ He did not abolish the OT rules of righteous punishment. He regarded the entire situation; the evil motivation of the accusers and gave a righteous judgment according to the entire OT law and not just a verse that is picked out of its context.³⁵

The Early Church’s Understanding of the Law in Acts

Elders and Scribes did not keep the Law

The book of Acts calls those who claim that Jesus spoke against the law ‘false witnesses’ (Acts 6:13). The previously mentioned idea that Jesus tried to correct the wrong understanding of the law by the Pharisees is supported by Acts 7:53 where Stephen claims that, among others, “elders, and the scribes” (Acts 6:12) “have not kept” the law. It shows the importance of keeping the law in the way it was originated.

The next issue appears in Acts 15. It can clearly be seen in this chapter that an important part of the covenant has been removed or fulfilled. The circumcision has been

³⁴ J. Daryl Charles, “Garnishing with the ‘Greater Righteousness’: The Disciple’s Relationship to the Law (Matthew 5: 17-20),” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 12 (2002): 1.

³⁵ “For since the one who wrote the law is also the judge that presides over it, everything in between – freedom and condemnation, life and death – is under his authority (5:26-27; cf. Luke 4:18-19; 5:24). This explains, then, the second part of Jesus’s statement. Jesus sends the woman away – free, but not without qualification. Since he is still Judge, she must live accordingly. She must live as one under the law of God (and of Christ; cf. Gal 6:2). As will shortly be announced in the pericope to follow, true freedom is found in Christ (8:31-38), which serves as further evidence that this pericope fits comfortably where it sits. It is in this way that the pericope presents its conclusion and interpretation.” Klink, *John*, 396. See also Martin Luther, “Sermons on the Gospel of St. John,” in *Luther Works 22-24,69*, vol. 69 (St. Louis, MO: Concordia, 1957), 22:10.

an important part of the OT. It is the sign of the covenant between Abraham and God. Deut 10:16 shows that the circumcision of the flesh should symbolize the circumcision of the heart.³⁶ It talks about the necessity of the circumcision of heart before Israel would inherit the land, just as Joshua was called to circumcise the foreskin of the flesh before he would inherit the land (Josh 5:2-8). These two circumcisions present one interwoven concept.

As mentioned above circumcision has been the sign of the covenant God did with Abraham (Gen 17:10). Therefore, the Israelites have been the physical and spiritual descendants of Abraham. When Jesus appeared the circumcision of the heart came to its fullness in him. The new sign of the covenant with God became the baptism³⁷ as Mark 16:16 states: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” The new sign is not the sign of belonging to Abraham anymore, but the sign of belonging to Christ. It, therefore, does not focus on the belonging to Abraham but uplifts the belonging to Christ. Gal 3:29 clarifies in this context that if you “be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” To be heirs according to the promise can only be those who

³⁶ Such circumcision of the heart (e.g. in Rom 2:28-29; 9:24-29) and the uncircumcision of heart (e.g. Lev 26:42) refer in their context to the necessity of humiliation and obedience before God. Further information about the circumcision of heart is comprehensively presented by Lemke in his book-article: Werner E. Lemke, “Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor,” in *A God So Near: Essays on Old Testament Theology in Honor of Patrick D. Miller*, by Patrick D. Miller, ed. B. A. Strawn and N. R. Bowen. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2003), 299–319.

³⁷ Even though the theological world is divided about baptism as the fulfillment of the OT circumcision, renown scholars as Oscar Cullmann believe in it as absolutely, Biblical evident. Cullmann, for example, states that “the understanding of Christian Baptism as a fulfillment, and thus as repeal, of Jewish circumcision” is unequivocal. He (and other supporters of the fulfillment in baptism) base their arguments on definite explanations in Paul’s writings, that link the baptism with the circumcision as its successor. Some of those texts are Col 2:11; Eph 2:11-13; Gal 3:6-9; Rom 2:15-19; 4:1-12 Oscar Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J.K.S. Reid., Studies in Biblical Theology 1 (London: SCM Press, 1950), 56.

are under the promise and therefore under the covenant, which is sealed by the sign of the covenant.

Jesus brought the circumcision to its fulfillment in the practice of the baptism.³⁸ His flesh was cut and everybody who would believe in him had to die to self (Rom 6) and resurrect with a changed heart. Acts 15:20 shows that the removal of the circumcision has nothing to do with the general abolishment of the law, since the laws, the council requires the newly converted to keep are based on the Mosaic law as well. It is rather the fulfillment in Christ that lifted the former covenant sign towards the next level. “Through Jesus teaching and practice the law is being affirmed, confirmed, and upheld. For the disciple, it is to be obediently practiced, hence, Matthew’s emphasis on doing and keeping.”³⁹ The principle and the practice of a covenant in Abraham and Christ remain the same.

The Council of Jerusalem Rejected Parts of the Moral Law

The second issue in that paragraph is Acts 15:5. Beside the circumcision, the Pharisees wanted the Gentiles to keep the law of Moses. So why should the council reject this if the law of Moses would still be valid? At first, it is interesting to observe that the council did not have a clear answer at hand. They had to study, think and pray about the issue. Secondly, they decided not to lay a burden on the Gentiles they could not keep and

³⁸ Karl Barth, *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans. Ernest A. Payne. (London: SCM Press, 1948), 43–44. adds that “Circumcision refers to natural birth; it is the sign of the election of the holy lineage of Israel, which with the birth of the Messiah achieved its goal, so that therewith this sign lost its meaning.” See additional Garret, summarizing several authors opinion regarding the continuity of circumcision in baptism: James Leo Garrett, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 504–506.

³⁹ J Daryl Charles, “The Greatest or the Least in the Kingdom: The Disciple’s Relationship to the Law (Matt 5:17-20),” *Trinity Journal* 13, no. 2 (September 1992): 150.

thirdly they decided that the Gentiles actually should keep some of the regulations of the law of Moses.

So how does that fit together with Christ utterance that he did not come to abolish the law? When the former Pharisees asked for the Jews to keep the law of Moses, this would include sacrifices and all sort of feasts that pointed to Christ and had surely been fulfilled in him. This question, therefore, had to lead the Apostles into a study. They had to find out what in the law of Moses had been fulfilled in Christ and what parts would still be valid. However, before James would give a conclusion on that question, Peter stood up and proclaimed that there should not be a burden put on the Gentiles that even the Jews have not been able to bear.

So what kind of burden is he talking about? His explanation why that burden⁴⁰ should not be put on the shoulders of the Gentiles is an explanation of righteousness by faith (15:7-11). It ends with the sentence "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they." Peter is addressing the claim of the Pharisees in 15:1 in which it is reported that the Pharisees expected the Gentiles to be circumcised in order to be saved. Hence, parts of the discussion have obviously been debates on righteousness by faith, rather than the abolishment of the law.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Nolland shows that the use of the term 'joke' or 'burden' in reference to the law, has not been understood in a negative sense, but was regarded as a necessary tool, given by the grace of God, to lead the Jews on the right path. This is supported by several OT text, presenting the law as a blessing, rather than a negative joke (e.g. Ex 19:5; 24:7-8; Lev 18:1-5; Dt 4:7-18.32-40; Ps 19; Ps 119) For further information see: J. L. Nolland, "A Fresh Look at Acts 15:10," *New Testament Studies* 27, no. 1 (1980): 105–115.

⁴¹ The contrast between Acts 15:10 and V11 "suggests that Peter's emphasis about the yoke of the law in v. 10c falls not on the particular commandments of the Mosaic law that Jews found difficult or impossible to fulfill, but on the conviction that salvation is granted by God on account of Jesus Christ, not achieved through obedience to the law." Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Acts*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 635.

After the congregation has been convinced by Peter's statement on righteousness by faith, Paul and Barnabas began to share the experiences they made with the Gentiles. Lastly, James raises his voice to finally answer the question what parts of the Mosaic law should be kept by the Gentiles since this had been the second claim of the Pharisees in Acts 15:5. James presents that the call of the Gentiles had been prophetically foretold. Continuing, he states that there should be no unnecessary trouble laid upon the Gentiles (Acts 15:19), except to "abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood."⁴² In his conclusion, James shows that parts of the law of Moses should actually be kept, since all burdens he decides to place upon them are parts of the Mosaic regulations.

Why then is he picking up those three?⁴³ Johannes Munck gives an interesting explanation, by presenting the importance of eating together, which would not be possible if the Gentiles would not keep the food regulations. "the common meals were very important to primitive Christianity. [...] one essential was to make it possible for Jews and Gentiles (that is, for Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians) to meet at the common table." However, even though this thought is a notable addition, it is surely not the core of the issue.

⁴² Johannes Munck, *The Acts of the Apostles: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, trans. William F. Albright, 12. print., The Anchor Bible 31 (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday & Company, 1978), 140.

⁴³ Polhill believes that the moral rules did not have to be mentioned at the council since they have probably been known and kept by most already. He believes that the council mainly dealt with the difficulty to bring Jews and Gentiles on one table, so that in their unity Christ could be seen: "Morality was not the issue at the Jerusalem Conference. Fellowship was, and the decrees were a sort of minimum requirement placed on the Gentile Christians." They were given to "assure the purity of the Jews community and to allow for social interaction between the Jews and the non-Jews in their midst." John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary volume 26 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 331–332.

Instead, the main answer can be found in the verses which follow Acts 15:19. Moses's writings were read in all cities every Sabbath. That means his law was well known. By picking up only those three parts of the law, we should not conclude that James decided to allow the Gentiles to break other commandments of the law just because these commandments are not listed among the three points.

The most probable reason why they put a special emphasis on those four regulations is that the Gentiles, coming from a heathen background with different practices, probably had special problems with such laws.⁴⁴ Another aspect is that the things mentioned have already been in existence before the Mosaic law was given, wherefore such did not belong to the additions of the Mosaic law.⁴⁵ The changes in the law were according to James, quoting OT prophecies about the new covenant, "nothing less than what God had promised to Abraham and David"⁴⁶, a promise to become a

⁴⁴ Wiarda shows that several theologians regard the counsel of Jerusalem as an example of contextualization of the Gospel. Meaning that the council discussed and developed principles, which they applied on a current, specific situation. Timothy Wiarda, "The Jerusalem Council and the Theological Task," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 46, no. 2 (June 2003): 233–234. Even though I don't agree with the way they understand contextualization, I still do believe, that the council developed and applied general principles on specific situations in Acts 15. Supported is this idea by the fact that Paul obviously contradicts the council's decision, if the decision wants to be understood literally. But, Paul's application makes absolute sense, if the council worked with general principles from which they drew these four applications. See 1 Cor 10:20 in contradiction to 1 Cor 10:23-25. In verse 20 Paul gives further explanation about the decision which has been made in the council of Jerusalem. 1 Cor 10:23-25 shows that eating or not eating was not the issue. There is only one God and even if pagans sacrifice meat to other God such would not change the purity of the meat. Still the council forbade it because of the issue Paul explains in 1 Cor 10:20. They wanted to protect the pagans in their context from partaking in heathen practices. This also shows that there is no contradiction between Paul's application in Rom 14:14; 1 Cor 8; 1 Cor 10 and Acts 15.

⁴⁵ For an extensive discussion on the topic see Schnabel, *Acts*, 641–646. He presents six different, possible interpretations of Acts 15,20

⁴⁶ Walter C Jr Kaiser, "Davidic Promise and the Inclusion of the Gentiles (Amos 9:9-15 and Acts 15:13-18): A Test Passage for Theological Systems," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 20, no. 2 (June 1977): 111.

blessing for the entire world, already set in the covenant with Abraham, before Moses law came into existence.

Acts 21:17-25 shows that the problem Paul was facing with the Jews was different. His struggles with them had been in connection with circumcision and keeping of Jewish feasts/offerings. These Jewish converts called Paul to partake at a Jewish festive and to offer sacrifices in order to show that he still keeps the law and that the accusations towards him, being a transgressor of the Mosaic law, were wrong. Giving that instruction to Paul shows parts of the burden the Jewish Christians laid on their heathen brothers. They did not understand the fulfillment of the law in Jesus Christ wherefore they kept doing sacrifices and celebrated Jewish feasts, believing it to be part of their duty.⁴⁷ Since those have been God-given traditions it must have been hard for the believing Jews to break with such traditions, pointing to Christ and being fulfilled in him. The entire accusation in the following chapters is concerning the changes that took place through Jesus Christ.

It is not that Paul rejected the law, he just could not continue following regulations, as a necessity for salvation, which have been pointing to Christ and be fulfilled in His death and resurrection. These would have been a denial of the deed that Christ had done on the cross. It would actually not be a correct keeping of the law, since part of the law's purpose has been to point to Christ and to prepare His first coming. That is perhaps the reason why Paul can say: "Neither against the law of the Jews, neither

⁴⁷ The fact that Paul agrees on the purification rites, which the elders, who believed in the validity of the Mosaic ordinances, laid upon him does not show, that he agrees with them, but rather that he is willing to humble his position for the sake of unity. see Schnabel, *Acts*, 877–880.

against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended anything at all.” (Acts 25:8).

In the words of T. David Gordon,

Only the apostolic, post-resurrection instruction enables us, with any confidence, to determine which aspects are fulfilled in the first coming of the Messiah, and which in His second coming. And such instruction plainly indicates that many of the ‘jots and tittles,’ not the least of which are circumcision, the calendar, and the dietary code, have indeed passed away [/have been fulfilled].⁴⁸

James on Fulfillment and Abolishment of the Law

After Jesus perception of the law and the view of gathered counsel of His apostles and direct followers could be observed in regard to their approach to the law, James will be considered next. The reason why the next layer is built by James perspective results from the fact that the letters of John, Peter, and Jude do not contain direct arguments about the abolishment or fulfillment of the law. Therefore, James is the next in the line who experienced Christ’s walk on earth and who became part of the leading counsel in Jerusalem.⁴⁹ Since he has been the one who uttered the conclusion at the Jerusalem council for the Gentiles, it seems fitting to observe his approach next.

James, who argued in the counsel of Jerusalem that no heavy burdens should be laid on the Gentiles concerning the law, mentions the law in the first chapter of his letter

⁴⁸ T. David Gordon, “Critique of Theonomy: A Taxonomy,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 56, no. 1 (1994): 33. Augustin adds another aspect to the fulfillment of the law that took place in Acts. He refers to the differences between Luke and Acts, both written by Luke. He links the changes that are going on between Luke and Acts with the changes that appeared between the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary. In such Luke would still report a time in which the earthly sanctuary and therefore the old covenant was valid and kept, while Acts moves on to the time of the heavenly covenant. (Such connection will be discussed more in later parts of this study) Alfredo G. Jr Agustin, “A Spatial Shift in Luke-Acts: From the Earthly to the Heavenly Sanctuary,” *Ministry* volume 87, no. June (2015): 21–24.

⁴⁹ Theologians differ about the question if James in Acts and James, the writer of the letter of James are the same person. Syreeni provides profound evidence why James in Acts and the writer James were most probably the same person. Kari Syreeni, “Did Luke Know the Letter of James?,” *Svensk exegetisk årsbok* 78 (2013): 79–80.

as “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas 1:25).⁵⁰ He argues that whoever looks into this perfect law of liberty will not be a “forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work.” (Jas 1:25) It would be impossible for him to argue in that way if he would have the same law in mind that he called troublesome for the Gentiles (Acts 15:19). The reason for that different perspective must be the decision that has been agreed on in the counsel of Jerusalem.⁵¹ The congregation there understood that several laws have been fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Besides those laws that have been brought to their fullness, as mentioned in the Sermon of the Mount and also addressed in James 2, there are several laws which don't have to be observed anymore but found their final goal in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When James calls to look into “the perfect law of liberty” (Jas 1:25) he sees a beautiful law that does not cause the one who observes trouble, but freedom.⁵²

⁵⁰ Childs sees a strong parallel between the law of liberty in James letter and the life in the Spirit of Paul, which will be addressed at a later point of this study. "In a real sense, James understanding of Christian freedom from the 'law of liberty' is paralleled to Paul's understanding of Christian life in the Spirit." Brevard S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible*, 1st Fortress Press edition. (Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 548.

⁵¹ Pfeleiderer and Dibelius argue for a similar position, believing, that James refers to “the moral duty of the Decalogue.” Otto Pfeleiderer, *Primitive Christianity: Its Writings and Teachings in Their Historical Connections*, Volume IV (New York: Williams & Norgate, 1885), 308; Martin Dibelius, *James: A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, trans. Heinrich Greeven (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 119–120. Some others argue that there is not enough information existing, which could support such kind of claim. Still, the link to the book of Acts and James argumentation should be sufficient. Even if James would refer to the entire OT, it would probably include it in its fulfilled status, which would reflect its state in the time James writes about it. Blomberg argues in this line: "for James, the 'perfect law of liberty' forms the Christian's guide (v. 25) – not Torah per se, but the Old Testament as fulfilled in Christ and interpreted through the grid of the gospel – in short, the new covenant. [...] This concept, so central to Paul and Hebrews [...], while not explicitly present in James, dovetail perfectly with the language of the letter here. Far from driving a wedge between James and other New Testament authors with respect to the issue of law-keeping, this passage demonstrates James's harmony with additional apostolic testimony on the topic." Craig L. Blomberg and Mariam J. Kamell, *James: Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary series on the New Testament volume 16 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 98.

⁵² Additional information and an extensive discussion on the passage around Acts 15,20 in Schnabel, *Acts*, 641–646.

In the second chapter, James continues that thought. Here he calls the law “royal” (Jas 2:8), which shows his high regard of it. He continues explaining that whoever transgresses one law transgresses “the whole of the law” (Jas 2:10)⁵³. He exemplifies his argument through the law ‘not to commit adultery’ and ‘not to kill’. Through his reference to those two he shows that at least these two OT laws are still valid. So, if somebody transgresses any law, he is guilty in transgressing the whole law (Jas 2:11). His conclusion is that people should, therefore, speak as people who will be judged by that “law of liberty” (Jas 2:12). Even though he still calls that OT law the law of liberty James shows that people will be judged according to it. What then is the role of the law according to James? James continues his argumentation that the keeping of this “law of liberty” is an expression of faith. If somebody does not keep that law he expresses that he does not have faith. However, if somebody has faith he will show his faith by keeping the law.

⁵³ Since the law ‘royal law’ is explained in its application by its context through several OT laws, which are part of it and directly leads towards the expression ‘whole law’ two verses later, a majority of scholars believed that the ‘royal law’, James is referring to contains the entire Torah. Supporters of this view are e.g. James Hardy Ropes, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of St. James* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1916), 198; Arnold Meyer, *Das Rätsel des Jacobusbriefes* (Gießen, Deutschland: A. Töpelmann, 1930), 149; O. J. F. Seitz, “James and the Law,” in *Studia Evangelica*, volume II (Berlin, Germany: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), 179–180; Christoph Burchard, “Nächstenliebegebot, Dekalog Und Gesetz in Jak 2,8-11,” in *Die Hebräische Bibel Und Ihre Zweifache Nachgeschichte: Festschrift Für Rolf Rendtorff Zum 65. Geburtstag*, by Erhard Blum, Christian Macholz, and Ekkehard Stegemann (Neukirchen-Vluyn, Deutschland: Neukirchener Verlag, 1990), 524–529.

Some other scholars, contradict that view and see in the royal law only the law of love to the neighbor. Such position is only possible by a separation of Jas 2:9 and verse 10, which is very unlikely in its context and mostly based on presuppositions, rather than a detailed investigation of the text. Some scholars supporting this view are: Johann Eduard Huther, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the General Epistles of James, Peter, John, and Jude* (New York: Forgotten Books, 1887), 82; Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the General Epistles of James, Peter, John and Jude* (New York: Palala Press, 1859), 45. A broader discussion on that topic can be found in Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, *The international critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 401–408.

This conclusion of James shows that Christ's fulfillment of the law does not mean that the law does not have to be kept anymore. James shows that the law still has its validity and importance, even though some parts of it do not have to be kept since they found their full purpose in Christ's redeeming service on earth.⁵⁴ Even when James addresses the "royal law" pointing to the law "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" he does not reduce the law on that principle but shows in the following that this "royal law" contains the other laws of the OT which are still valid in the big frame of love towards God and the neighbor.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Davids and some other scholars believe additional to it that James is referring to the Torah in its interpretation, done by Jesus. Peter H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, Reprint edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 114.

⁵⁵ An extensive discussion and evaluation of the law in James 2,8-12, showing all kind of possible interpretation in their strength and weaknesses, can be found in Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle of James*, 401-419.

CHAPTER 3

PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE ON ABOLISHMENT AND FULFILLMENT

According to the Bible writers consulted and evaluated so far, it can be said that seemingly the law has not been abolished. The only difficulty that appeared in the counsel of Jerusalem has been the question about what parts of the law have been pointing to Christ and have been fulfilled in him in a way that they don't have to be kept anymore. That the law is generally seen as still valid could be observed in James's letter.¹

In Paul's Letter to the Romans

Foundations for the Interpretation of Paul's Thoughts

What follows now is the biggest section of this study, the investigation of Paul's explanations on the fulfillment of the law. These investigations will be based on what has been investigated so far. The foundation for the understanding of Paul's writings are the explanations of Christ in the Gospels, the teaching of the counsel of His apostles and delegates in Jerusalem and of James. Since many doubts and controversies exist about the exact dating of Paul's letters, they will be investigated according to their order in the NT.

¹ Even if he does not clarify in which way he regards the law as valid and scholars differ on, which part of the law he may refer to, a majority of scholars believe that James believed in the validity of the law. Some of them, in a way that James expresses the law as interpreted by Jesus, others believe that he shows the principle of love towards the neighbor as the fundamental principle of the law, but especially among modern Commentaries, it is believed that James generally regards the law as valid. How that is to be understood in the context of the entire NT will be regarded in the following chapters, dealing with Paul's explanations.

If the letter of Hebrews is regarded as Paul's or not is of no importance for this study. Hebrews will be investigated in the last chapter of the study.

Basic Principle – from Outward to Inward Laws

Paul begins with a principle that sound similar to what James wrote. He states in Rom 2:13 that not those who hear the law will be righteous before God, but “the doers of the law [...] will be justified.” Paul shows here at the beginning of his letter that the law is valid and of importance for everybody who believes and for every unbeliever as well. If somebody is doing the law, this shows that God, who is the only one who can write the law into the heart of a human; lives in him.² That person is therefore justified.

Paul shows at the beginning of his letter that justification is connected with obedience in faith (Rom 2:14-15).³ In this context, he even addresses the circumcision. He states in Rom 2:25 that if somebody breaks the law, but he is circumcised, the “circumcision is made uncircumcision.” But, he continues, that for somebody who keeps the law, his uncircumcision should be “counted for circumcision” (Rom 2:26). He even carries on that the uncircumcised, who keeps the law should finally judge over the circumcised who transgresses the law (Rom 2:27).

Then he gives the final answer for this explanation. What truly counts in God's sight is not what is outward, but what is inward. Regarding the circumcision, he explains

² As VanGemeren puts it: “Moreover, the Spirit of God is the ‘inner light;’ who works in the believers to make the law a joy.” Greg L. Bahnsen, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, Counterpoints (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 52.

³ Cranfield regarding the interpretation of these verses in view on the relation between law and Gentiles: “two forms may be distinguished (a) that which understands *ta tou nomou poiwsin* of the Gentile Christians faith, and (b) that which takes it to refer to those works of obedience which, though but imperfect and far from deserving God's favor, are the expression of their hearts faith.” C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, The international critical commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: T&T Clark International, 2001), 156.

that the true Jew is the one that is circumcised at the heart (Rom 2:29). This explanation gives another reason why the counsel of Jerusalem decided that circumcision is an unnecessary burden for the Gentiles that believe in God: It has been a sign of the inward circumcision. When Christ came, He brought it to fulfillment and set another level for the covenant with Him.⁴ Instead of ‘just’ being circumcised in flesh and heart, He set the baptism as a symbol, expressing that everybody who wants to follow Him has to die to self and resurrect with Him as his Lord.

Every Human was Condemned by the Law

Paul leads on with the special role of the Israelites which actually don't have any advantage towards the Gentiles. He starts to quote a text from the OT that shows the guilt of each human being. He concludes in Rom 3:19 that everybody knows now what the law says to them “who are under the law.” He refers back to the OT quotation by which he showed earlier that the law condemns each human being. In Rom 3:19, his sentence leads on that the people know now, what the law says about those who are under the law. The question that appears automatically is: Who is under the law? The explanation of Paul follows in the latter part of Rom 3:19. Paul continues that statement “it saith to them who are under the law” – “that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become

⁴ See additional Dunn in his explanation of Rom 2:29: “In holding up the concepts of ‘Jews’, ‘circumcision,’ and ‘law’ to closer inspection, he [Paul] does not deny them to his own people. Rather his is an assertion of what Judaism, what the covenant, what the law and circumcision are all about, a reality which he implicitly claims to have been realized in the eschatological working of the Spirit in the hearts of Gentiles as well as of Jews [...] How is it that physical circumcision can be a means of transgressing the law? Paul’s answer is that the circumcision God looks for is not an outward visible cutting of the flesh, that the law is not to be thought of as fulfilled at that level. The circumcision God looks for is the circumcision of the heart, what the prophets had called for (Deut 10:16; Jer 4:4) and promised (Deut 30:6; Ezek 36:26,27; Jub.1.23), something which various Gentiles had given greater evidence of (2:15), something which could be fully accomplished only by the Spirit of God.” James D. G. Dunn et al., *Romans 1 - 8*, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 38,A (Waco, TX: Word Books Publisher, 1988), 125,127.

guilty before God.” So back to the question – Who is under the law? Paul himself answered that question: “all the world” should become guilty before God through the law. That means all the world is under the law. Nobody is excluded.⁵ The whole humanity has sinned and the entire humanity stands under the condemnation of God’s righteous law.

Paul continues to explain in Rom 3:20 that nobody can be justified by the deeds of the law, but that everybody is condemned by it since the law grants man an understanding of sin. Paul develops his line of argument: Until Rom 3:20 he made his listeners understand that every human is totally condemned by the law and there is nothing they can do about it. Then Rom 3:21: Humans are condemned by the law, but “now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets.” Paul’s argument is not a replacement of the law, but he is doing a comparison between the condemnation through the law and the offered righteousness in Jesus Christ which is granted by faith in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:22) and by no deeds of the law.⁶ Therefore, Paul explains that God’s righteousness is manifested without the law. It is granted by faith and grace alone. To clarify the thought, he repeats in Rom 3:23 and 24: “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God, Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” The point Paul wants to make is to

⁵ See Chrysostom: “But the words ‘that all the world may become guilty before God,’ are spoken at once both of Jews and of Greeks. [...] For he would be in strict propriety called a guilty person, who cannot help himself to any excuse, but needeth the assistance of another: and such was the plight of all of us, in that we had lost the things pertaining to salvation.” Michael Paul Middendorf, *Romans 1-8*, Concordia commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 255.

⁶ See Augustine “The righteousness of God then is without the law, but not manifested without the law; for if it were manifested without the law, how could it be witnessed by the law? That righteousness of God, however, is without the law, which God by the Spirit of grace bestows on the believer without the help of the law.” *Ibid.*, 280.

ensure to every listener that they are saved by faith in the grace of God (Rom 3:28). In Rom 3:30 he shows that it does not matter if a person is circumcised or not, both will be saved by faith.

What does that change regarding the law? Paul is clear in his answer: All this argumentation should by no means “void the law through faith”, but “establish the law.” Nowhere in Romans 3 it has been Paul’s intention to void the law, but he tries to make the listeners understand the role of the law and the role of the faith in Christ. This part is actually not addressing the fulfillment in Christ, but it is simply correcting a wrong understanding of the law.

Law brings Wrath – No Law, No Transgression

In Rom 4, Paul argues in a similar way. His argumentation is not so much about the fulfillment of the law, even though it might have been the cornerstone, which leads into the discussion. His explanation is about righteousness by faith rather than the law. One verse that might cause some confusion in regard to the law is Rom 4:15, where Paul argues that the law "brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression." That statement might sound as if the law has a negative touch, but that argumentation of Paul needs to be regarded in its context and the previous things Paul said. He explained in chapter 3 that the law condemns all men on earth. It is, therefore, the result of the existence of the law that the wrath of God comes on man, still, the actual problem here is not the law, but the transgressor.⁷

⁷ See Mounce: "By trying hard to fulfill the demands of law (and failing), their pious efforts merely turned them into conscious sinners. Dunn comments that 'rightly understood, the law does not mark off Jew from Gentile but rather puts Jew alongside Gentile in need of the grace of God.' 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law' (Gal 3:10). Where there is no law, there can be no breaking of the law. Sin would still exist, but it could not be designated as the

Paul is facing a group of people that try to achieve righteousness by deeds. He is sincerely fighting against that issue and presents the problem that even those people have with the law. It is that the law shows the transgressions. If there would be no law, no transgression could be seen, but since there is a law by that everybody will be judged as Paul showed in Rom 3 and later in Rom 5, this law is the issue by which the wrath of God will come over this earth. Paul wants to show those people who try to achieve righteousness through the law, that the law is actually their problem. They are transgressors; therefore, the law brings the wrath of God upon them, if they don't accept the redeeming grace of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:9).

The Law and its Consequences Existed since Adam

Even though this section is not directly linked to the fulfillment or abolishment of the law, it still needs to be addressed, because it is regularly mixed with the argumentation about the removal of the law. It is therefore of importance to find out what Paul is addressing in these chapters. Still, Paul is not addressing any replacement of the law. His discussion is addressing a wrong approach towards the law.

In this change he is mentioning that "sin was in the world: But sin is not imputed when there is no law" (Rom 5:13). It seems as if Paul wanted to mention that the law appeared later in history. Even though that might be true for the Mosaic law he still gives some further information in the following verse. Here he continues with the words "nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." By these words, Paul shows that the

specific transgression of a law (cf. Rom 5:13; 7:7-11)." Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The new American commentary volume 27 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 127.

argument some people might have brought forth against him, that: Transgression is only charged since the law came into existence - is not true. The judgment came over Adam and all his children what shows that the law existed already before the fall of humankind⁸, even though the law of Moses was added later.

Paul addresses this law in Rom 5:20. He describes it as the law that “entered”. By the details that were added in that law of Moses, sins could be acknowledged that mankind did not realize previous to the appearance of Moses Law.⁹ That’s why Paul continues that through the added laws “offense might abound. However, where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom 5:20). The argumentation of Paul is addressing the misunderstanding of the law, but until here he did not reach an explanation about changes in the law that took place through the appearance of Jesus Christ.

No more under the Law

In the context of chapter 6 where Paul talks about the necessity of the overcoming of sin for a converted Christian, Paul ushers the question "shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" In the context of the previous verses and chapters, it is obvious that Paul does not neglect the importance of the law, but he says that "we are" not under the condemnation of the law. His answer to that question: “God forbid” (Rom

⁸ Still it might not have been known by Adam and Eve that there is even a law, because they naturally followed the commandments of God. Their life was led by perfect harmony in love towards God and to one another.

⁹ “God gave the Israelites an extended code of legislation with the expectation that it would guide their life and conduct. The answer is that law was brought in so that the offense might increase. Law actually makes wrongdoing all the worse. Law was ‘slipped in’ says Moffatt, ‘to aggravate the trespass.’ Later Paul would write that apart from the law we would not have known the nature of sin (Rom 7:7; cf. Gal 3:19). The law was never intended to provide salvation but to convince people of their need for it. Law increased sin. That is the sad story of humanity estranged from God. But where sin increased, ‘grace increased all the more’ (v. 20). God lavished his grace upon us beyond all measure. His grace exceeded immeasurably the extent of human sin. Only by understanding the depths of human degradation can we hope to grasp, even in part, the surpassing wonder of divine forgiveness.” Mounce, *Romans*, 145.

6:15). He argues further that because of the redemption through Christ, people are “free from sin” and became “servants of righteousness” (Rom 6:18). This is another argument for the validity of the law. Righteousness means to live according to the right things and who tells what is right? – The law.¹⁰ Righteousness is, therefore, something that cannot be separated from the law. Even righteousness in Christ is only possible, because Christ fulfilled the law and the believer is baptized into his death and resurrection, which enables him to overcome sin and keep the law (Rom 6:3-4).

The Law of the Flesh vs the Law of the Spirit

Paul continues the same thought about the law in Rom 7. He begins with an explanation about the validity of the law, comparing the loss of validity of the marriage when one partner dies, with the believer in Christ who is dead to the law (Rom 7:1-4). His explanation that the believer is dead to sin has nothing to do with a change in the law as Paul clarifies in the following part of chapter eight, but the death to the law means that the person, belonging to Christ is not under the penalty of being a transgressor of the law anymore. He is clothed in Christ righteousness and is therefore even in transgression not seen as a transgressor. After that explanation Paul continues with a teaching about living in the flesh (from Rom 7:5).¹¹

¹⁰ Denney writes about it: "There is no absolute independence for man [...] our nature requires us to serve some master." And that master is, in this case, Christ, who explains through his law what is right. J. Denney, "St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans," in *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, by W. Robertson Nicoll, volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1983), 636.

¹¹ Cranfield explains the Christians living in the flesh as Christians who have “the basic direction of their lives determined and controlled by their fallen nature.” C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans: Introduction and Commentary on Romans* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 1975), 337.

He explains that his sin shown by the law leads to death. The fruit of the walk in the letter as he calls it is death. He is comparing this old life in the letter with the new life in the Spirit. This comparison recalls Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. When Jesus addressed the OT commandments in that sermon he showed that the commandments given at Sinai are not just letters which have to be kept, but contain whole, "spiritual intention[s]"¹²/principals.

What is Paul addressing here? He tells clearly that the law is good (Rom 7:7), but that the law caused him to realize sin. This realization, when understood as a letter that has to be obeyed, caused him to struggle. He explains that the law showed him the sin and revived it, therefore (Rom 7:9).¹³ Paul is reporting about an experience with sin he made in the past. He acknowledges that the law is "holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). Yet, this good thing given by God caused him to die. Paul continues explaining the problem he experienced with the sin until he reaches the point where he addresses the core.

He already clarified that the law is not the true problem. In Rom 7:14 he points out that the law is actually spiritual, but now follows the problem: Paul was not spiritual, he was carnal. This carnal nature of him and the spiritual law stood in a constant conflict. He wanted to do the good, but he could not (Rom 7:17-20). He starts to explain that there

¹² George Campbell Morgan, *The Ten Commandments* (Ann Arbor, MI: Baker Book House, 1974), 118.

¹³ In the last part of Rom 7:9, Paul refers to his death through his encounter with sin. The meaning behind his expression here is understood by Bandstra as follows: "I died' can only mean becoming specifically aware of the penalty of sin" Paul explaining his death through coming of the commandment does therefore not refer to any removal and negativity of the law. Andrew John Bandstra, *The Law and the Elements of the World: An Exegetical Study in Aspects of Paul's Teaching* (Kampen, Netherlands: J.H. Kok, 1964), 137. Moo adds to that thought that "it is difficult to understand by [I died] (v. 10a) anything other than condemnation resulting from sin." Douglas J Moo, "Israel and Paul in Romans 7.7-12," *New Testament Studies*, no. 32 (1986): 125.

are two laws, the law that is good and comes from God (Rom 7:22) and “another law” that leads “into captivity to the law of sin” (Rom 7:23). This law of sin seems to be the carnal nature that is fighting within him against the law of God which he desires to do.¹⁴ This result in his conclusion of Rom 7:25: With his mind, Paul serves "the law of God, but with the flesh" he serves the "law of sin". Is his solution that it is impossible to keep the law?

No, his argument is not over, it continues in chapter 8. In this chapter, he presents the solution for the problem and the actual cause and result of it. Previously Paul explained his journey as a believer who desired to do the will of God but has been condemned to his flesh under the law of sin that caused him to fall into temptation again and again. In the first verse of chapter 8, he begins with the key for the problem: For all those “who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, there is no condemnation.”

Previously Paul described a person struggling in the flesh to keep a law that is spiritual. Here in Rom 8:1, he explains that this is impossible, but that the spiritual law has to be kept in a spiritual way. This “law of the Spirit” as Paul calls it has set him free from the “law of sin and death”¹⁵ (Rom 8:2). What does that mean? Paul shows that there is hope in the struggle he just explained. It doesn’t need to be existing in the way he described it in chapter 7, if people understand that they can’t keep a spiritual law through fleshly powers.

¹⁴ “Expressions like ‘the Law of sin’ [...] in 7:23,25 do not equate the Law of God with sin. Paul would reject this conclusion here just as vehemently as he did in 7:7. However, he has also detailed how it is possible for sin to make use of the Law’s command in order to provoke and identify sin (7:8, 11, 13).” The law uses the flesh to provoke sin, which is expressed as the law of sin. Such law does not refer to the law of God, which Paul describes as holy, righteous and good. Middendorf, *Romans 1-8*, 575.

¹⁵ An expression for the revelation and condemnation through the law and fleshly desires.

In Rom 8:3-4 Paul gives a beautiful explanation how that is possible. He explains that Christ has been able to “condemn sin in the flesh” and that Christ, as He lived in total harmony with the will of His father, is able to “fulfill” the “righteousness of the law” in those who follow him in the Spirit and not in the flesh. By this, Paul explains that the human nature is not able to keep the law in its own power, but that the only thing a human can do is to constantly connect with Christ and follow His direction and act by faith in His promises and strength. The Holy Spirit who comes, if invited, enables man to live as Christ did: He lived according to the law which is spiritual.¹⁶ Those two, the Spirit of God and the Spirit of the Law are in perfect harmony and work together.¹⁷

Opposite to that the fleshly, carnal human, and the spiritual law: Those will always relate to each other as two negative poles, which push one another away. They won't ever stick together. In this line, Paul explains that those who “are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom 8:5).

The spirit harmonizes with the Spirit and the flesh with the carnal desires. Therefore the “carnal minded is death” but “the spiritual minded [...] life and peace” (Rom 8:6). Paul repeats his argument in different words to ensure, that the listener

¹⁶ A heavy debate is existing within Protestant Christianity, whether the Christians or Christ's “obedience fulfills the law's requirement.” McFadden argues “that the righteous requirement of the law refers to Christian obedience by the empowering Spirit.” (p. 486) He discusses the issue extensively in his article: Kevin W McFadden, “The Fulfillment of the Law's *Dikaiōma*: Another Look at Romans 8:1-4,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 3 (September 2009): 483–497.

¹⁷ “God is Spirit, and his law is by definition spiritual. His purpose was to lift the minds of the saints before Christ from the ceremonies and institutions to himself, because only ‘spiritual worship delights him.’ Moreover, the Spirit of God is the ‘inner light,’ who works in the believers to make the law a joy. The demands of the law are such that they require a love for God and the power of the Holy Spirit: ‘The love of the Law thus created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit is a sure sign of our regeneration and adoption.’ Otherwise, the law becomes a burden and unprofitable.” Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 52.

understands what he tries to say. He explains in Rom 8:10 that the mortal body of a human being is “dead because of sin”, but that “the Spirit is life because of righteousness”. He who lives by the Spirit is therefore covered with the righteousness of Christ, who kept the law.¹⁸ This Spirit, who is life, has been able to raise Christ from the dead, Paul continues his argument: and is, therefore, able to “quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” (Rom 8:11).

His conclusion follows in Rom 8:12: All he explained in the second part of Romans 7 is not necessary. No human has "to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: But if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Rom 8:12).¹⁹ Paul is addressing the hope in Jesus Christ. His explanation shows that Christ came to grant humanity eternal life and to save the human race from the burden of sin.

The sinner that comes to Christ is not condemned to continue sinning. He is redeemed by the Spirit of Christ that lives in him. That Spirit of God enables to live a life according to the standards of the law of God. Therefore, Paul leads on that those who are “led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God” (Rom 8:14). He shows that it is a privilege to be called son of God. Likewise, he shows that this privilege can be granted to everybody who allows the Spirit of God to lead his life.

¹⁸ Paul links the power of the Spirit with Christ’s merits, by which alone Christians can be saved and through which they receive the right to be empowered by his Spirit. It is the link between justification and sanctification Paul is referring to. See McFadden: “I have argued that the fulfillment of the δικαίωμα of the law in Romans 8:4a refers to Christian obedience to the law’s righteous requirement by the empowering Spirit. This interpretation explains the liberation announced in 8:2 and fits with Paul’s emphasis on walking by the Spirit and pleasing God in 8:4b-11. It also fits the pattern of chapters 6-8 where sanctification is the purpose and result of the objective work of Christ and our death with him.” McFadden, “The Fulfillment of the Law’s Dikaiōma,” 490.

¹⁹ Paul is not only talking about putting on Christ’s righteousness, but also pointing to the power to overcome, which enables the believer to achieve the victory over sin.

Paul continues that those who are his children, because his Spirit and the deeds of his Spirit live in them, are likewise heirs that will suffer with him and “be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17). Paul’s explanation of the law in Romans chapter 7 and 8 is by no means an abolishment of the law. It is not an explanation of the impossibility to keep the law, but it is a correction of a wrong understanding about the law, which also Paul used to have. This wrong perception believes that the law has to be kept in the letter. It focuses on the written word to fulfill the letter of the law, rather than looking at the one who fulfilled it by keeping it and thereby enabled all who believe in him to live according to his precepts of life.²⁰

Paul explains that the idea to keep the law through own power is wrong. He even described that this approach causes people death and makes sin even more sinful. Yes, the law shows the sins to the sinner, but the sinner is not able to keep the law since he is carnal, from this world and born by flesh, for by the law is a spiritual thing that can only be approached in a spiritual way. Paul explains from his own experience, that people who try to keep the law will fight a terrible fight in which they are condemned to do what they don’t want to. He shows that there is only one hope in this misery.

²⁰ See Adewuya: "Having spelt out the distinctive features of new life in the Spirit, Paul once again calls the believers to become more than they already are by actively participating in the work of salvation. He previously urged them to ‘count themselves to have died to sin’ and to ‘offer their members to righteousness’ (6.11, 12). Believers are no longer under obligation to live according to the flesh. The obligation that lies on each believer is directly tied to the new identity, which Paul now associates with belonging to a family as sons of God (v. 14). The Christian's behavior is to reflect not only who he/she is, but whose he/she is. Or as Morris puts it, ‘it is important that those who are Christ's live as those who are Christ's'. The reason for the believer's obligation to walk according to the Spirit is given in verse 13.21 To live according to the flesh results in a certain death. Over against the certain death that results from living according to the flesh is the assurance that the one who lives according to the Spirit, by putting to death the deeds of the body, will live. In Rom. 8.13b, Paul shows the decisiveness with which believers are to deal with the deeds of the flesh. They are to put the deeds of the flesh to death, otherwise, they will die." J Ayodeji Adewuya, “The Holy Spirit and Sanctification in Romans 8.1-17,” *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 18 (2001): 81.

The law is holy and good and leads to life, but only the lawgiver²¹ is able to keep that law and enable others to do so. As long as the believer tries to work in his own strength and not out of faith in the strength of Christ, his promises, and his promised Spirit, he will never be able to keep the law.

Still, Paul continues with a serious message: Only those who have the Spirit and are led by the Spirit to follow the law, are called sons of God and are heirs of eternal life. Paul calls his listeners to trust in Christ and in the power of his Spirit. That Spirit will work what it is called to do. It will enable to keep the law, not according to the letter, but in a spiritual way, meaning in the strength of the Spirit. Paul encourages to trust in the Spirit of Christ that is able to do the things impossible for man.²²

Paul's explanation of the law has many similarities with Christ's Sermon on the Mount. Christ taught that the law is not about following the letter, but about following spiritual concepts revealed in the law. He did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it. He came to bring it back to its origin. He taught the spiritual fulfillment of the law that has to be kept, since he said that nobody will inherit the new earth who will not "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" (Matt 5:20). Why so? Because the

²¹ Bunch gives a brief, but concise explanation why Christ is perceived as the lawgiver: Taylor G. Bunch, *The Ten Commandments* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1944), 11–13.

²² "Being led by the Spirit is not restricted to a few ecstatic's but is to be seen as a typical experience of all God's children. In its present context, it has to do with the whole contrast of walking either according to the flesh or in accordance with the Spirit. It is about holiness in daily living. It is not to be construed as a sporadic occasional event but a lifestyle of daily submission of the believer to the Spirit, the resultant effect of which is a continual putting to death of the misdeeds of the flesh. It is something continuous, affecting all the operations of the believer's activities throughout every moment of his/her life. The leading provided by the Holy Spirit, contrary to the popular understanding of the passage, is not just a matter of the Spirit providing guidance to the believer or providing help in decision-making. Rather, it has moral undertones in as much as the Spirit-led sons of God are obligated to put to death the flesh daily. It has but one goal in view - the saving from sin, the leading unto holiness." Adewuya, "The Holy Spirit and Sanctification in Romans 8.1-17," 82.

Pharisees and Scribes tried to keep the law according to the letter, but Christ tried to teach them that the law is spiritual and has to be kept in a spiritual way.

The same message is explained by Paul in Romans chapter 7-8. The law is spiritual, holy, righteous and good and it can be kept if people look upon Christ and trust in the power of the Spirit. If they act according to his promises in his strength and do not believe in self, which will lead, to keep only the letter of the law.²³

Israel could not Obtain the Law

Paul jumps in the next part into a new section. He addresses the calling of Israel, the true sonship of Abraham and God's superiority in his judgment and use of people, until he comes back to the problem his Jewish nation has. Paul proclaims in Rom 9:31 that Israel followed the "law of righteousness". Paul lifts up the law by calling it righteous. Then he continues explaining that even though Israel followed the law of righteousness, they have not been able to attain it. What has been their problem? He explains it in the following, Rom 9:32: They could not attain it because they tried to keep it by "the works of the law" and not "by faith."

With this utterance, Paul comes back to his original topic. If Israel tried to attain the law, they have to look into the law and try to keep it, isn't it? No, Paul explains that this human thought is exactly the problem the Jewish nation suffered from. As he tried to explain earlier, he explains, that the law of God is righteous and spiritual. It can therefore

²³ See Hendriks, arguing for the keeping of the law, since it is designed as a blessing for each believer: "What then does the leading of the Spirit—to change from the passive to the active voice-actually mean? It means sanctification. It is the constant, effective, and beneficent influence which the Holy Spirit exercises within the hearts and lives of God's children, enabling them more and more to crush the power of indwelling sin and to walk in the way of God's commandments freely and cheerfully." William Hendriksen, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 256.

not be kept according to the letter, meaning by human efforts alone. The law can only be kept by faith, faith in the redeeming power of a loving God.

Paul's explanation in Rom 9:31 shows that he does not perceive the law as something negative that the nation of Israel "followed after the law of righteousness", on the contrary, he appreciates it, but the sad part follows: Even though they tried to do something good, they have not been able to achieve it. They should try to achieve it, yes. However, they should attain to the law of righteousness. They have not been able, because they still thought, that they could add something to what Christ had provided. Paul shows that this is impossible. The law can only be attained through faith in the God who is able to do the impossible.

In his argumentation, Paul does not mention that it has been impossible for the Jews to keep the law. The only thing he mentions is that they had the wrong approach. And that was the reason why they could not do it. If they would have trusted rather in God than in their own deeds, Paul indicates that they could have done it.²⁴ Faith has been the key element before Christ came, and faith is the key element after he came and went into heaven. That seems to be the key message Paul wanted to deliver to his "kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom 9:3).

²⁴ Finney argues in a similar direction. He believes that the moral law could have been and can be kept. In order to clarify his understanding, he limits the achievement of 'perfection' in regard to keeping the law, through his explanation of 23 aspects of what perfect obedience does not mean. Even though I do not entirely agree with his approach, he still presents several aspects which are worthy to think about. His general belief is that if God gives a law, he also provides the means for His people to reach, what he calls them to do. Charles G. Finney, *Finney's Systematic Theology*, Abridged. (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1976), 60–71. Seifrid discusses the question, who failed in Israel's story? – Israel in their obedience, or scripture by laying something impossible on Israel's shoulders, when calling them to keep the law. His answer, quoting Rom 9,6: "it is not as though the Word of God failed." Mark A Seifrid, "Paul's Approach to the Old Testament in Rom 10:6-8," *Trinity Journal* 6, no. 1 (1985): 6.

Israelites Wrong Zeal for the Law Corrected

Paul's expositions of Israel's role in the salvation story, after their rejection of Christ, goes on in Rom 10. He acknowledges that the Jews have a zeal for the law of God, but that they have a problem. Paul says that their zeal is not "according to knowledge" (Rom 10:2). What does that mean? He gives the explanation: The Jews are ignorant of the righteousness of God. They are ignorant of God's righteousness, not because they don't believe that God is righteous, but because they believe that they can establish their righteousness before God.²⁵ The desire to establish their righteousness before God by keeping the commandments, in order to be observed righteous before God, is enough evidence for Paul, that the Jews "have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Rom 10:3).

Paul's claim here is serious. He says that everybody who believes that he can achieve any kind of good standing before God out of his own strength is rejecting the righteousness of God.²⁶ He points out that human effort has to be done with the knowledge and acknowledgment that no human being is able to achieve anything good in God's sight and to believe that God has done everything to save. Paul's claim is that the establishment of righteousness in a human's life is independent of any deed a human

²⁵ Ortlund expresses this option of interpretation the following: "zeal for God (10:2) echoes the pursuit of the law of righteousness (9:31), so 'not according to knowledge' in 10:2 parallels 'not of faith but as of works' in 9:32. The positive attributions to Israel (zeal, the pursuit of the law) are mitigated by Paul's diagnosis of a critical missing element – knowledge (10:2-3), faith (9:31-32). In both instances, earnest activity exists, laudable in its own right, yet with some fundamentally misguided dimension that infects and ultimately renders damning the otherwise praiseworthy efforts of Israel." Dane Ortlund, "'Zeal without Knowledge': For What Did Paul Criticize His Fellow Jews in Romans 10:2-3?," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 73 (2011): 28.

²⁶ "Israel is ignorant of the righteousness or salvation that comes from God, refuses to submit to it in the sense that it refuses to receive righteousness as a gift from God and seeks to acquire it by herself." Brice L. Martin, "Christ and the Law in Paul," in *Novum Testamentum Supplement Series*, vol. 62 (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 1989), 138.

could do. That explanation leads him to the statement that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:4). This statement cannot be taken out of its context.

The context showed that Paul does not believe that Christ abolished the law.²⁷ Why then is he telling his readers in Rome that Christ is the end of the law? Paul is referring back to Rom 10:3 where he explained that nobody can establish his own righteousness, but only accept the righteousness of God.²⁸ Rom 10:5 might cause some further confusion about the role of the law. Paul explains here that Moses described “the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doth those things shall live by them”. This verse, Rom 10:5 refers back to Lev 18:5. Moses calls the people of Israel to do all the commandments he delivered to them.²⁹ These laws include issues of moral value, feasts, rights, sacrifices, tasks, etc. So why could those people live by these regulations, since they regularly transgressed God’s laws (the golden calf just at the Sinai, the rebellion of Corah, etc.)? If God is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow (Heb 13:8) who promised Adam to be saved by grace (Gen 3:15) and of whom Paul

²⁷ Instead of referring to *telos* (end, ultimate goal) as a breakup of the Law, Wright translates it as climax and points thereby to Christ as the climax of the law. N. T. Wright, *Climax of the Covenant: Christ and The Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 242–243. Meyer summarizing parts of Wright’s explanations adds the following: “Christ became what Israel was supposed to be but failed to be. Therefore, Christ fulfills the purpose of making Israel the means by which the world can be saved. Christ also functions as the climax of the covenant in that He causes Israel to stumble and die so that a way of salvation for the world may open up.” Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 213.

²⁸ Thielman answers to that questions that the Jews were not able to achieve the purpose of the law, because they rejected its goal, which is Christ. Frank Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 1994), 207.

²⁹ Gathercole believes that the original text in Lev 18:5, quoted by Paul, referred to a lengthening of the days God would give His people in the promised land. Craig A. Evans, *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004), 126–145.

admits that he saved Abraham by grace, could he encourage a system that calls people to achieve self-righteousness through their own deeds? “By no means!” That is not what Paul is explaining in this passage.³⁰ What is he then referring to?

The laws the Israelites had to keep and by which they should live included a sacrificial system of grace. The whole system of the sanctuary with its sacrifices has been designed as a system in which God’s grace and providence in dealing with sin could be observed and His mercy that could be experienced.³¹ Heb 9 helps to understand what Paul is referring to in Rom 10:4-5. In Heb 9:13-15 Paul explains the differences between the sacrifices done at the time of the OT and the one sacrifice of Christ that fulfilled them all.

In Heb 9:13 he wrote that the blood of “bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh”. That description shows that the Jews had to do something. They had to sacrifice bulls, goats and give other offerings. These deeds would grant them sanctification and purification of their lives. So even if they had to act according to the sacrificial orders given, the sanctification and purification came by faith in the vicarious death of the animal, being a type of Christ.

³⁰ Deut 30:20 further explains that Israelites are called to love and obey God, but that it is God who is their “life and length of days.” It clearly shows that there are some conditions for God to get active, but that it is the grace of God alone, which grants life.

³¹ VanGemeren gets to the same result, while his explanation varies and enriches the author's explanation: “On the surface, it may appear that Leviticus 18:5 teaches that the inheritance is obtained by keeping the law: „keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them, will live by them. I am the Lord.” (Cf. Ezek. 18:9). However, when we compare this text with the sermonic expansion in Deuteronomy 30:15-20, we find that the Lord himself is the source of life and that anyone who loved the Lord would gladly submit to his law in faith in the living God. Moses said: ‘See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments, decrees, and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. . . . This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you, life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Deut. 30:15-16, 19-20)’ Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 33.

In Heb 9:14 Paul continues to connect that thought with Christ. As the offered sacrifices sanctified and purified those who offered them by faith, “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” That verses show that sin has always been pardoned by grace, even though people past Christ just have to offer the deed of faith whereas Israelites had to offer deeds in form of sacrifices in order to achieve God’s grace through faith. These principles seem to be based on the knowledge Christ delivered still after His resurrection and the apostles counsel where they studied the same subject.

Going back to Rom 10:4-5: “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.” Christ fulfilled all the ordinances that pointed to Him. He ended the law in a way that the law was pointing to Him and found its peak in His person.³² No deeds are necessary to please God anymore, but mercy can be received by faith alone in Jesus Christ.³³ Rom 10:5: “For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them.”³⁴ The righteousness “of the

³² Bechtler points to the Hellenistic and Biblical use of $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ and explains that the correct translation of the it would be “goal’, ‘completion,’ ‘result,’ or ‘conclusion.’” He refers to many scholars who proof and support such meaning of $\tau\epsilon\lambda\omicron\varsigma$ as commonly accepted among Biblical scholars. Steven Richard Bechtler, “Christ, the Telos of the Law: The Goal of Romans 10:4,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56, no. 2 (April 1994): 299–300. See additional Wilhelm C Linss, “Exegesis of Telos in Romans 10:4,” *Biblical Research* 33 (1988): 7–9.

³³ Hays, recognizing that Paul is quoting from Moses in Lev 18:5 in Rom 10:4-5, while quoting in Rom 10:6-8 from Deut 30:11-14 in which righteousness by faith is proclaimed, states as an harmonizing explanation for Rom 10:5: “If one obtains the righteousness of faith as personified in Deuteronomy 30:11-14, then they will find life, just as Moses promised in Leviticus 18:5, because one will be obeying the ‘true message of the law.’” Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 77.

³⁴ Watson and many other scholars believe that Paul is referring to eternal life, in this passage. The problem with that perspective is that he would thereby say that Paul believes that people could be saved by deeds, which would contradict anything else he wrote. Francis Watson, *Paul and the Hermeneutics of Faith* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, 2004), 318.

law” in Israel’s times previous to Christ’s better sacrifice was based on obedience. In order to repent and to be cleansed from sin Jews had to appear to the temple and give sacrifices. These sacrifices as a deed alone would not cleanse any of them, but faith in the vicarious death of the animal as a symbol of the Messiah would cleanse them. That OT system included deeds in form from sacrifices, but Israelites never achieved righteousness by these deeds without believing in the meaning of the sacrifice. That is the reason why God, even though he introduced the sacrificial system to Israel, claims in many passages, through His prophets, that He cannot bear the blood sharing sacrifices of the nation of Israel anymore (Isa 1:11; Amos 5:21; Mic 6:6-8; etc.).

Neither the sacrifices nor any other moral or social deed/law could save the Israelites from their transgressions. The only solution God ever accepted was faith in his loving grace. When Paul refers, in Rom 10:5 to Moses, saying that the person that is doing these things shall live by them, it still does not mean that any person is saved by deeds. Paul does not say that Christ brought an absolutely new system. He just explains that there has been a time in which righteousness was achieved “of the law”. Things had to be done by faith in the coming Redeemer.³⁵

Until Christ came people lived according to the directions given by the law. These things had to be kept exactly since the OT regulations have been foreshadowing Christ.³⁶

³⁵ “In the religion of Israel as set out in the OT [...] relationship with God was based on God’s love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness – not on any type of legalistic observance by people of a set of divine laws or instructions. Yet the OT prophets always insisted that the covenantal relationship established by God with His people was to be expressed by them in ways that were prescribed by the ordinances given by God to his servant Moses, that is, by a life governed by ‘covenantal nomism’ as expressed in the Mosaic law.” Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 851.

³⁶ Paul refers to the same wrong idea of righteousness, which is “his own” and comes “of the law” in Phil 3:9. Also here it shows his attempt to correct the common misuse of the law and clarifies, that righteousness can only be achieved “through the faith of Christ.” See also Simon J. Gathercole, “Torah,

If they would not have obtained, the message of the coming Redeemer would have been hidden and the saving hope in God would have died – just as it happened. If the laws given by God, delivered by Moses, would be kept, people would live by them, since the deeds they had to practice pointed them towards the Messiah who would come to save them. The message God presented has never been a message of hope in own deeds, but a message of hope in Christ. The ordinances have been set as a reminder, that's why people could live by them in faith.

When Christ fulfilled the sacrifices in His final sacrifice, He became “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” (Rom 10:4). All the law pointed to God, but in Christ, it came to its fullness. He was the final goal (τελος) of all types pointing to Him and all other laws, finding their fulfillment and therefore their original meaning in the living example of Jesus Christ.³⁷ In Moses's time people had to do the laws by faith, still, it was a righteousness by the law and by the deeds of the law, since the deeds of the law pointed to Christ who has not come in their times. It was, therefore, righteousness by the law achieved by grace and faith, which always has been part of the law. Righteousness through faith in the offered sacrifices has always been central for the Jewish sacrificial system, but these laws ended/ were fulfilled when people believed in the final sacrifice and the righteousness that is now attained through faith in Christ's

Life, and Salvation: Leviticus 18:5 in Early Judaism and the New Testament,” in *From Prophecy to Testament: The Function of the Old Testament in the New* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, n.d.), 142.

³⁷ “The noun τέλος had a rather wide range of meaning in both classical and koine Greek, signifying not only ‘termination,’ ‘end,’ or ‘cessation’ but also such theological significant matters as ‘purpose,’ ‘event,’ ‘validity,’ ‘task,’ or ‘duty.’ In the history of the interpretation of this verse, the nuances of ‘goal,’ ‘purpose,’ ‘fulfillment,’ ‘termination,’ and/or ‘end’ have been often intertwined and quite diversely spelled out. The literature on how this short statement should be understood is voluminous.” Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 849.

accomplished, final sacrifice in the past, rather than in animal sacrifices pointing to Christ's death, which was still to come.³⁸

Loving One Another Fulfills the Law

Paul continues his presentation on the role of Israel and the right living as a Christian until He mentions the law again in Rom 13:8. He tells that he who "loveth another hath fulfilled the law." He leads on in Rom 13:10: "therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." What Paul describes is exactly how Christ fulfilled the law. On one hand, He fulfilled the OT ordinances through His life which has been the better sacrifice (Heb 9:23). However, why has it been the better sacrifice? Christ gave a perfect sacrifice because He was unblemished and spotless, fully God and fully Man (1 Pet 1:18,19). These attributes resulted from the eternal love in him. God is love. Love is His first and highest attribute. God is the Source of all true love and His character is the perfect definition of what love is. Such is also the reason why any great achievement, for God's purpose, done without love is worth nothing (1 Cor 13:1-13). He could therefore fulfill the sacrifices in Himself. His sacrifice presented the fullness of which the previous sacrifices have just given a glimpse. He also fulfilled all other laws through His living example.³⁹

³⁸ See White regarding the sacrifices: "In the plan of redemption there must be the shedding of blood, for death must come in consequence of man's sin. The beasts for sacrificial offerings were to prefigure Christ. In the slain victim, man was to see the fulfillment for the time being of God's word, "Thou shalt surely die." And the flowing of the blood from the victim would also signify an atonement. There was no virtue in the blood of animals; but the shedding of the blood of beasts was to point forward to a Redeemer who would one day come to the world and die for the sins of men. And thus Christ would fully vindicate His Father's law." Ellen Gould White, *Confrontation* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1971), 21.10 The section links Rom 10 to Heb 9:15-10,1

³⁹ See White: "To fulfill means to keep, or perform. (James 2:8.) So when He came to be baptized by John the Baptist, He said, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Matthew 3:15. To fulfill the law is to obey it perfectly." Ellen Gould White, *The Story of Jesus* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1900), 71. Kruse mentions additionally: "By continuing to pay their debt of love to one another, believers will give expression in their lives and behavior to what the law of Moses sought to

The law cannot be observed according to the letter, but only by the Spirit. Why? Because the Spirit is the one that lets the fruits of the Spirit grow in the human heart. And the foundation of these fruits is love (Gal 5:22). Without the Spirit, there is no love, and without love the commandment cannot be kept, since its main essence is neglected.⁴⁰ Christ presented that love of God in action. He showed that the principle behind every law is love, that no law can be kept without love and that love towards God is expressed in the commandment that is “like unto it” (Matt 22:39).

By telling the people that the commandment of first importance is to love God (Matt 22:37) Christ showed them that the second is a result and expression of the fact that the first commandment is understood. Since true love towards the neighbor is always grounded in love towards God, Paul can shortcut what Jesus said and reduce it on the second part in which the love towards God is expressed.⁴¹

Paul continues to give a little explanation of that foundation, in the love towards God, in the following chapter. Rom 14:7-8 he explains: “For none of us liveth to himself,

inculcate. [...] When a person loves his fellow believer, Paul says, he has ‘fulfilled the law’. [...] The reference to ‘whatever other commandment there may be’ probably refers to the other commandments of the Decalogue, rather than being a generalizing reference to other legal systems. This is implied by the fact that all these commandments are summed up in the one rule, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’, and that such love fulfills the law, clearly a reference to the law of God, in particular, the Decalogue.” Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 501.

⁴⁰ “the effect of Paul’s gospel is that believers, by walking in the Spirit, are enabled to love one another, so that what the law sought, but was unable to produce, is fulfilled in them (cf. 8:3-4). Understood in this way, Paul’s teaching does not involve inner contradictions.” Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 502.

⁴¹ “whoever fails to manifest this love [the love of the Samaritan] is breaking the law which he professes to revere. For the spirit we manifest toward our brethren declares what is our spirit toward God. The love of God in the heart is the only spring of love toward our neighbor. “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” Beloved, “if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us.” 1 John 4:20, 12.” Ellen Gould White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1898), 505.

and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord.” Love towards others results in the love towards God, who alone is love (1 John 4:8).⁴²

In Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians

Spiritual Fulfillment of the Law

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul addresses a general principle of Christian living and the understanding of the law. In the second chapter, Paul writes about the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God. The essence of his explanation of wisdom is found in 1 Cor 2:10-16. Paul explains that God is the one who reveals all wisdom. He differentiates between the wisdom of the world, which he later defines as foolishness in God’s eyes (1 Cor 3:19) and the wisdom of God. The wisdom of God he presents as coming from the Spirit, “for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God” (1 Cor 2:10).

He goes on with his thought exemplifying that no man knows the thoughts of another, just his Spirit. Similar to that no human is able to understand anything about God if not inspired by God’s Spirit. Paul concludes that spiritual things can only be understood if the “Holy Ghost teacheth” (1 Cor 2:13). However, the man that is natural “receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God [...] neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor 2:14).

⁴² These rules of love are just the same, as found in the OT. Edward, summarized by Kuntz puts it the following: “the rules of Christ are the same rules given by Moses, but Christ gave a ‘new commandment’ in the sense of supplying the motive to fulfill the same old commandments.” Paul Grimley Kuntz and Thomas D’Evelyn, *The Ten Commandments in History: Mosaic Paradigms for a Well-Ordered Society*, Emory University studies in law and religion (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 148. In this way, the fulfillment is the fulfillment of the law in love towards the neighbor also an expression for the extension of the 10 Commandments by the practical presentation of its principles.

As Paul argued earlier that the law is a spiritual as well (Rom 7:14). The law cannot be understood nor kept by the human mind alone. It is the Spirit that grants the understanding. The fulfillment of the law is, therefore, only spiritual possible. That principle seems to be in Paul's mind when he says that he became "to those under the law [...] as under the law" (1 Cor 9:20). Paul is not under the law since he is guided by the Spirit.⁴³

The letter causes him to realize sin and to look towards Jesus. Being under the letter seems to be a synonym for two things: First for the time in which some parts of the letter had to be done in order to achieve forgiveness (sacrificial system) and second those who do not understand the spiritual background of the Biblical message. Those are people whose conscience is awakened by the law, but such realization does not drive them towards Christ but to achieve righteousness by keeping the letter as it is written. Both attempts show that the redeeming gospel of Jesus Christ has not been understood.

Previous to that section Paul addresses some difficulties that appeared between believers. To those, he says in 1 Cor 6:12 that even though all such lawful things exist, against which nobody can say something, it does still not mean that such would be good in each situation.⁴⁴ This text is often misunderstood but does not refer to the abolishment

⁴³ "He does qualify his statement that he became like someone under the law when working among those under the law by pointing out that he himself was not under the law. This latter phrase refers to his understanding of the fact that the Mosaic covenant has been superseded by Christ (Rom 6:14-15; 7:6; Gal. 3:23-24; 5:18). There is nothing inappropriate about keeping the law as a matter of tradition or preference, as long as such law-keeping is not imposed on Gentiles and does not undermine the fellowship of brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. Gal. 2:11-14). Although Paul understood himself to live under the conditions of the new covenant in Christ rather than under the law of Moses, he was happy enough to observe the law when living among those who might have stumbled if he had not." Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 427.

⁴⁴ 1 Cor 10:23ff in which Paul repeats the same statement in slightly different wording, underlines this principle.

of the law. Just in the following verses, Paul explains again, that those who do the unlawful things will not inherit the kingdom of God.⁴⁵ He surely does not want to say that all things on earth are lawful to him. The direct context of the verse does not allow this interpretation.

The Strength of Sin is the Law

One more passage of the first letter to the Corinthians is worth mentioning. It is found in 1 Cor 15:56. Paul's writing here is similar to passages in his letter to the Romans. He tells that the "sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law."⁴⁶ It is the transgression, the sin that causes the death, but the sinner is condemned by the law that he transgressed. And since no human being could save himself by keeping the law, it becomes the law that makes the sin so sinful and terrifying.⁴⁷ The following verse 1 Cor

⁴⁵ Lockwood explains: "As Christians, each of them was 'a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none' [quote from Luther Works]. But they failed to understand that Christian freedom from sin and the Law's condemnation is not freedom to sin, but instead is freedom to live by the power of the Spirit in accord with God's Law (e.g., Romans 6; 13:10). Christians must keep in mind the other part of the paradox: a Christian is also 'a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.' To that end, Paul supplies the necessary corrective: 'Not all things are beneficial (1 Cor 6:12; cf. 7:35). [...] The Corinthians have been thinking only of themselves, rejoicing in their spiritual privileges, without giving sufficient thought to what benefits the whole body of Christ. They are causing offense to the Gospel and are defaming their Lord. As they sin, they are remaining enslaved to the passions of their sinful nature, which must be crucified and die (e.g., Rom 6:6-11). [...] Those who call Christ 'Lord' are to serve him, not their passions.'" Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia commentary (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Pub. House, 2000), 215.

⁴⁶ Sin is the problem but cannot condemn by itself. The law provides the legal ground for the condemnation of sin.

⁴⁷ Garland gives a well thought through explanation about the verse: "[Paul] did not need to provide an in-depth explanation on the connection between sin and the law, because he had articulated this idea previously, and the law as a delusive basis of salvation is not at issue [...]. Death gains its power over humans through sin because sin demands capital punishment as its moral penalty (Rom. 6:23). The law, not only unable to arrest sin, spurs it on and pronounces death as its sentence. Paul assumes that his readers understand that through Adam came sin and death (1 Cor. 15:21-22). Through Moses came the law. The law brings awareness of sinfulness (Rom. 4:15; 5:13, 20; 7:7; Gal 3:19), provokes impulses to sin, which then become deliberate transgressions, with the result that death tightens its stranglehold. The law cannot give life or impart righteousness (Gal. 3:21) but brings only condemnation (2 Cor. 3:6). Through Christ alone come the gracious forgiveness of sins, redemption from the law, and the resurrection from the dead. It is this last element, the resurrection of the dead, that is at issue and that the Corinthians fail to grasp." David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 747.

15:57: “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” That connection clarifies Paul’s thought. The law is the power of sin because the law condemns the transgressor, but thanks be to Christ who removed the sting of death, by taking the condemnation of sin unto His shoulders. Without sting (the sin being conquered by Christ) the power behind it (the law) lost its condemning power and victory over death is won.

In Paul’s Letter to the Galatians

Teachers of a False Gospel and Misunderstood Law

A crucial letter on the fulfillment of the law is Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Paul shares in the first chapter that a problem appeared among the Galatians. People preached another gospel than the gospel God revealed to him and through him to the Galatians. That new gospel seemed to contain the circumcision since Paul explains in Gal 2:3 that even Titus who went with him to the Apostles in Jerusalem was not "compelled to be circumcised." He continues that those “false brethren” came to spy out the liberty that the young Church had in Christ and that it is their desire to bring others “into bondage” (Gal 2:4). It seems that Paul faced similar problems in many parts of the world. He went to preach the gospel that has been given to him “by revelation” and “not after man” (Gal 1:11, 12).⁴⁸ However, then people appeared who started to preach about the necessity of

⁴⁸ Moo argues why it must have been Jesus and no human, to whom Paul is pointing as his teacher and revelator of the Gospel in Gal 1: “Verse 12 explains the last part of verse 11: my gospel is not a human gospel because I did not receive it from a human being but through a revelation of Jesus Christ. [...] Here in Gal, 1:12 Paul needs to stress that the essential ‘truth of the gospel’ – the fact of Christ’s death and resurrection and its implications for Gentiles and the law – was revealed to him by God and not taught to him by any human being. [...] The indisputable reality of the gospel that Paul received through revelation (and for which no human is responsible) was also confirmed to him by those who were ‘in the faith’ before him.” Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 93–94.

circumcision and the need to keep the OT laws, of which the Jerusalem counsel decided, that they have been fulfilled in Christ. He calls those people “false brothers” which shows that they officially belonged to the church, but still somehow did not.

They were false brothers because they did not understand the redeeming act of Jesus Christ but desired to place a burden on the shoulders of the Galatians.⁴⁹ Paul is not judging their intention, which might be good, but he tells the church that people who proclaim such a message can't be true brothers in Christ because the foundation of a true brotherhood in Christ is only possible on the common ground of hearing, understanding and practicing the redeeming grace of Christ.⁵⁰ But why is circumcision such a big problem for Paul, since he also circumcised Timothy not to be a stumbling block for the Jews (Acts 16:1-5)?

The problem that Paul addresses, is that there are people who force others to be circumcised in order to be saved.⁵¹ That's why he proclaims that they spied out the church's liberty. The church has been set free from the burden of circumcision and other OT regulation since they pointed to Christ. In the OT times those regulations have not been a bondage. It has been a necessity, a reminder on the Redeemer to come and insure

⁴⁹ Bruce argues that bringing ‘converts of the Gentile mission – into bondage’ refers in the context of the letter to bringing them back ‘under the law’. He shows that they were placing the burden to achieve grace by keeping the Mosaic laws, upon the new believers. F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Exeter, England: Paternoster Press, 2002), 112.

⁵⁰ See Ambrosiaster: “they had entered by stealth, pretending to be brothers when in fact they were enemies. They entered with a great show of humility, pretending to be friends. To spy out is to enter in a way which says one thing but does another with the aim of attacking the freedom which we have in Christ Jesus.” Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon*, ed. Gerald Lewis Bray, Ancient Christian texts (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press Academic, 2009), 9.

⁵¹“This means that they came in by stealth and with guile, with the intention of reducing our freedom to slavery by forcing us to submit to the law of circumcision.” Ibid.

of the grace the Worlds would receive when the Messiah comes. However, since Jesus came, died and resurrected, the practice of the things which have been needed before would be a proclamation of unbelief.⁵²

By continuing the circumcision and the keeping of feasts and regulations set in the Mosaic law, originated to prepare the way for Christ, such person proclaims that the Redeemer did not come yet. The message delivered through the ongoing teaching of circumcision has been an expression for: We are still waiting for the Messiah to come. That is the reason why Paul strongly fights and argues against those streams among the young Christian church. Circumcision became an expression of unbelief in Christ. And Paul could not bear the proclamation of such incredulity.⁵³ His heart burned for the proclamation of the good news which is found in the power of the blood of Christ and not in the blood of animals or other regulations, being a shadow of the fulfilled form of circumcision by the true Redeemer.

In the following section, Paul gives an example that he experienced with the leading brothers and Apostles in Jerusalem. He underlines with the story of Peter being weak in the new principles of freedom in Christ and therefore rebuked by Paul, that the whole church understands and follows the gospel in the same way as he preached it to the

⁵² That proclamation of unbelief has most likely been the reason why Paul called them false brethren. Longenecker argues that their rejection of Gentiles as “true brothers” made them ‘false’ believers in Paul’s sight. Richard N. Longenecker et al., *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 41 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 2006), 51. I would disagree with this position since the rejection of another believer in Christ is not a criterium to judge, whether he is a believer. Being a believer depends on the realization and acknowledgment of personal condemnation through sin/law and the acceptance of Christ as personal savior. Since such was not true for those people among the Galatians, they could not be considered as true brothers in Christ. Another argument is the probable link to Acts 15 in which circumcision has been regarded as a necessity for salvation by the pro-circumcision party, while Peter proclaimed that faith alone in Jesus Christ saves.

⁵³ See additional: Timothy Gervais, “Acts 15 and Luke’s Rejection of Pro-Circumcision Christianity,” *Journal of Theta Alpha Kappa* 41, no. 2 (2017): 9–13. He shows the same principle in the counsel of Jerusalem, which addresses a similar complication as such in the church of the Galatians.

Galatians. To make it very clear Paul repeats the fulfilling message of grace in Jesus Christ. He reasons that there is nobody who is justified by his works, but that justification can only be achieved by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 2:16).

The problem he faced was connected with a false belief about the way of salvation. Those “false brethren” did not live through the grace of God but could not give up on the thought that they have to earn their salvation. Paul clarifies, not to be misunderstood, that even though believers are saved by grace, Christ did not come to be a “minister of sin.” Paul is not a person who belittled the transgression, “God forbid” (Gal 2:17). He continues to explain that his understanding of transgression leads much further than the commitment of commonly known sins.

He explains in Gal 2:18 that it is a transgression to build up that old system of worship that pointed to Christ. If Paul would return to the proclamation of circumcision, feast and regulations which have been fulfilled in Christ, it would make him a transgressor.⁵⁴

Paul continues in Gal 2:19, that “through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.” He shows that the law itself calls him to be dead to the law. By the explanation, he uses he shows that the law that pointed to Christ requires from him to die to that law and live for God, the Redeemer Jesus Christ to whom the law directed him.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ “Paul said that to go back on this fundamental commitment would be, in effect, to build back the old structures of repression and slavery, structures that have been once and for all shattered by Christ’s death on the cross and the pouring out of his Spirit upon His people. To yield on this point would be like trying to put the plan of salvation into reverse! The very thought was no less blasphemous than imagining Christ as the agent of sin. May it never be! God forbid!” Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary volume 30 (Nashville, TN: B&H, 1994), 197.

⁵⁵ See Das: “In the context of the letter, dying to the Law ‘through the law’ should most likely be interpreted in light of the believer’s dying with Christ in the latter half of the verse and perhaps also in light of Christ’s exhaustion of the Law’s curse in 3:13. The Law orchestrated Christ’s death and now no longer holds sway over those who share in that death.” A. Andrew Das, *Galatians*, Concordia Commentary: a

His explanation goes on. He was “crucified with Christ,” but he still lives, even though it is not him who lives anymore, but Christ who lives in him (Gal 2:20). Paul explains that he cannot “frustrate the grace of God: For if righteousness comes by the law then Christ is dead in vain” (Gal 2:21). That is his explanation of being dead to the law, through the law. The law points to the righteousness which will be achieved in Christ.

The moral and ceremonial regulation found their fulfillment in Christ. It is, therefore, the law itself that forbids Paul to continue to believe in salvation through the OT regulations that have only been a shadow of the things to come. They have been fulfilled in Christ and the law that called people to sacrifice in faith before Christ came calls him now to believe in the sacrifice that Christ gave and not to fall back into old principles which have been fulfilled. By doing so Paul would frustrate the grace of God revealed in the law and in his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He is therefore “through the law [...] dead to the law” (Gal 2:19). He is dead to the law, which also means that he does not live by the letter, but by the Spirit of God. He did not abolish the moral standards of the law, they are still valid, but they are written and established in the human’s heart through God’s Spirit in constant observation of– and connection to Christ.

Some Galatians Fell Back Under the Law

The false brothers which lived among the Galatians had already impacted and confused at least some of the Galatians. Paul addresses them in a compelling manner in the third chapter of his letter to the Galatians. He calls them “foolish Galatians” who have been “bewitched” (Gal 3:1). It sounds as if some who once believed in the redeeming

theological exposition of sacred scripture (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2014), 268. Other possible interpretation in Moo, *Galatians*, 167–171.

grace and the power in the blood of Jesus Christ fell into righteousness of works. Paul calls it a foolishness that they “began in the Spirit” and now try to make themselves perfect by the flesh (Gal 3:3).⁵⁶

They learned to depend on Christ, in the power of His blood and the Holy Spirit, but now they were fooled by false brothers to achieve the law in own strength. Then, He reminds them of the Spirit who “worketh miracles” among them, the Spirit got active, not by their good works performed according to the law, but “by the hearing of faith” (Gal 3:5). He wants to reinsure the Galatians that they are not able to do anything without the power of God’s Spirit that worketh in them.⁵⁷

Paul regards those who have this faith in the promise and strength of the Spirit of God, blessed. But those who are “of the works of the law are under the curse: For it is written, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them’” (Gal 3:10). Paul is not explaining that the keeping of the law is a curse in itself. He is referring to those who “are of the works of the law.”⁵⁸ The

⁵⁶ “What Paul wants his converts to see is that the Christian life is one that starts, is maintained and comes to culmination only through dependence on the activity of God’s Spirit (cf. 5:25; also see Phil 1:6, where the same verbs *enarxomai* and *epiteleu* appear and where the point is made that completion of the Christian life comes about on the same basis as its inception, viz. by God’s working).” Longenecker et al., *Galatians*, 103–104.

⁵⁷ Matera about Gal 3:2-6 “In Pauline thought, the Spirit is conceived of as ‘the miraculous divine power that stands in absolute contrast to all that is human.’ [Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, volume 2 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), 153.] The Spirit manifests itself in a person as mysterious and mighty, producing conduct which cannot be explained by merely human power. In Gal 4:6 the Spirit is identified as the Spirit of God’s Son. It is the Spirit which enables the believer to live an ethical life. Thus believers are led by the Spirit (5:18), producing the fruit of the Spirit (5:22).” Frank J. Matera and Daniel J. Harrington, *Galatians*, Sacra Pagina Series v. 9 (Collegeville, Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 1992), 112.

⁵⁸ A major discussion is going on about the definition of the phrase: being “of the works of the Law” (Gal 3,10). Meyer summarizes the difficulty about it in the following: “answering the question ‘Why are those who rely on the works of the law under a curse?’ is really another way of answering the parallel question: ‘Why can the law not provide the promised blessing?’” This study tries to provide a brief answer to both questions in the context of the fulfillment of the law. Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 147.

For further information about the ongoing discussion on the expression “works of the law” see Thomas R. Schreiner, “‘Works of Law’ in Paul,” *Novum Testamentum* 33, no. 3 (1991): 217–244. and

context shows that these are people who try to achieve salvation through their good deeds. That is something impossible and since those will not be under the saving blood of Christ, they are under the curse, the condemnation of the law.⁵⁹ There is no savior to save them since they try to save themselves by looking at the letter of the law. Gal 3:10 explained that everyone who does not do all things written in the law is cursed.

Paul continues his explanation in Gal 3:11 writing that, even though all men are cursed/condemned by the law, nobody can be justified by it. Paul probably refers to the OT, which shows that the curse of the law is on every human being, saying: Cursed is everybody that does not continue in “all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Paul simply presented here the unavoidable condemnation through the law for everyone who once transgressed it. The verse shows that the law is designed as a blessing, but it only provides and secures life for those who keep it. As soon as somebody transgresses the law, the original blessings turn into a curse for him. Since no human has been entirely free of sin people needed and received mercy in the sacrificial system that God established for His people in the OT.⁶⁰

Paul leads on with another OT quote: “the just shall live by faith” (Gal 3:11; Hab 2:4). As he mentioned prior, everybody is cursed and therefore depends on faith to live

Hilary B. P. Mijoga, *The Pauline Notion of Deeds of the Law* (San Francisco, CA: International Scholars Publications, 1999).

⁵⁹ Stanley claims that even if a person would be able to keep the entire law, the law could still not save him. Christopher D. Stanley, “‘Under a Curse’: A Fresh Reading of Galatians 3.10–14,” *New Testament Studies* 36, no. 4 (1990): 482.

⁶⁰ Bruce on that verse: "If life is assured to those who are justified by faith, then it is not assured to those who seek justification by law-keeping, whether they succeed in keeping the law or not." The OT quotation used by Paul in this section, therefore, need to have a different meaning. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, 161. Another approach finding an answer on the meaning of this expression is the discussion among scholars, whether "works of the law" refers to the written counsel of the law or to its implementation. Michael Bachmann, "Rechtfertigung Und Gesetzeswerke Bei Paulus," *Theologische Zeitschrift (Basel)* 49 (1993): 1–33.

by it.⁶¹ Paul shows that living by faith has been a reality in the OT teaching as well, but he continues saying that “the law is not of faith” (Gal 3:12). Surely, the law is not of faith. The law is spiritual, but it is not of faith. It gives directions and regulations, but faith has never been found in the law. The law revealed the curse of sin and opens the heart and mind to realize the necessity of a savior, but the law itself can’t be that savior. The law is therefore not of faith. It is the foundation that shows man, that he is lost and in need of redemption.

Paul continues with a “but” – meaning, yes, the law is not of faith, but there is another issue. That issue is that “the man that doeth them [the laws] shall live in them” (Gal 3:12). What is Paul trying to explain here? He is showing a controversy – telling the Galatians, that people can only be saved by faith (Gal 3:9), but the law is not of faith (Gal 3:12), still, people who would do them should live by the statutes (Gal 3:12). How should that work? Paul is quoting from the OT, referring to the times before Christ. He shows, that it only worked because the law included the sacrificial system of grace pointing to the Redeemer. All people who remained in the law achieved life and blessings in it. This law that the Israelites were called to keep have not been a faithless system.⁶² The keeping of the law included, besides the moral statutes, also those laws that called the Israelites to sacrifice and to confess their sins on the head of the slaughtered animal, so that by faith,

⁶¹ Bultmann radicalizes this view in his statement that ‘man’s effort to achieve his salvation by keeping the Law only leads him into sin, indeed this effort itself, in the end, is already sin.’ Such a person is doomed under the curse of the Law unless he finds faith in Christ’s offered salvation. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (London: SCM Press, 1952), 1:264-266.

⁶² Bahnsen argues the following "Galatians 2:19: ‘Through the law, I died to the law so that I might live unto God.’ It was the law itself that taught Paul not to seek righteousness and God’s acceptance through law-works! The Old Testament law was never legalistic in character or intention, though the Jews perverted it to that self-serving end. They simply did not see that ‘Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes’ (Rom. 10:4)." Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 96.

they would be cleansed from their sins. This system as part of the law Paul is the reason why people would achieve live in these commandments.

Another aspect is that the commandments in themselves are holy, just, good and a blessing for everyone who keeps them. People who do the law will be blessed by it and in this sense live through it. The law is the life principle of God that ensure a good living. Whoever transgresses them does not only bring an eternal curse upon himself but also a temporal. The one who keeps them will, therefore, live by them. For an eternal living, live was ensured by the sin offerings which were part of the law and told the Israelites that they will vicariously be saved by grace.⁶³ The law itself is not of faith, but the system the law presented contained faith and grace.⁶⁴

Still that system of the law has been a heavy burden for the Jews. Whenever anyone transgressed the law, he had to sacrifice an innocent animal for his mistake. That is why Paul, even though he regards the law as holy, can say in the following verse that "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). The curse of the law has been a two-edged sword. On one hand, it was presenting

⁶³ Bahnsen argues on the link between obedience and grace, the following: "Scripture does not present the Mosaic or law-covenant as fundamentally opposed to the grace of the new covenant-an erroneous view (essentially dispensational in orientation) that is at the heart of so much misguided thinking about the law today. For example, consider Hebrews 3-4. According to the New Testament, why was God displeased with the Israelites so that they could not enter the promised land? The answer is that they were disobedient (Heb 3:18), but this is the same as to answer that they were lacking faith (3:19)! They had the gospel preached to them, even as we do (4:2), but they failed to enter into God's promised provision because they failed to have faith (4:2)-that is, they were guilty of disobedience (4:6)! You cannot pit faith and obedience against each other in the old covenant; they are different sides of the same coin, just as in the new covenant (James 2:14-26)." Ibid., 97-98.

⁶⁴ "While the law is perfect for the needs of perfect people, it can on its own bring only condemnation and despair to sinners. None can approach the judgment unless they have accepted the blood of Christ." Such blood was represented in the animal sacrifices of the OT: "complete in Christ," being made the righteousness of God in him" (Col. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:21). These themes of the law and the gospel were at the heart of the typology of the sacrificial system." Desmond Ford, "The Lamb Is the Hinge," *Ministry* volume 51, no. The sanctuary and the cross, pt 1 (May 1978): 6.

condemnation, on the other, it was that vicarious sacrifice system the law placed upon the Israelites. When Christ came he became the cursed one, who "hangeth on a tree" (Gal 3:13) and finally redeemed mankind from the curse of sin and law.

Each time an Israelite had to bring a sacrifice he was reminded, that the victory over sin is not yet been won.⁶⁵ He still lived under the condemnation of his transgression. That stopped with Christ. The ban was broken in the blood of Christ and freedom from the curse of law was finally achieved. The law had no more power to condemn men since the fulfillment of the law and of all sacrifices has been achieved in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. That's why "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: For it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree'" (Gal 3:13).

Paul moves on with the promise that God gave to Abraham. It was the promise of righteousness by faith in the mercy of God. The faith that God would provide, what he has promised: The seed, which is Christ (Gal 3:16). That promise which was given by faith, Paul argues, cannot be disannulled by "the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after" (Gal 3:17). His conclusion: The law that came 430 years later has still been based on the promise given earlier to Abraham (Gal 3:18).

"Wherefore then serveth the law?" Paul answers this question: "It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made, and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator" (Gal 3:19). In this verse, Paul reveals a new aspect to the fulfillment of the law, Christ was referring to in Matt 5:17. Christ fulfilled all laws in himself. He fulfilled the eternal law, written by the finger of

⁶⁵ Sanders goes so far to express that the OT law did not even expect total obedience since it provided a solution for sin in its sacrificial system. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977), 442–447.

God into a stone, placed in the Arc of the Covenant. That law he fulfilled in his person in a way that he presented the true essence of that law in himself as a living being, reflecting all beauty of that law in his person.

The second fulfillment he brought has been the fulfillment of laws and regulations that pointed towards him and that found their peak in him, wherefore they ended with him. This is the law Paul is referring to in Gal 3:19. Even that temporal law has been “ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator”, which is God, and is therefore holy (Gal 3:20), Paul shows that it ended and has just been added temporally because of transgression.⁶⁶ As soon as the Messiah would come, this law would end.⁶⁷

The Abolished, Temporal Law

What does this law contain? It is the law, given to Moses at Mount Sinai, written in a scroll and laid in the holiest next to the Arc of the Covenant (Deut 31:26). It is not part of the eternal law, written by the finger of God, but was added by the reason of transgression.⁶⁸ Paul clarifies, that this law was not “against the promises of God” (Gal

⁶⁶ Oakes offers three different options regarding the purpose of the added law. Two of those are considerable: 1st “the law was added to limit or control sin or its effects”, and 2nd “the law was added in order to register, count, or give awareness of sins.” Even more probable than these two explanations, is another one, explained in the following footnote. Peter Oakes, *Galatians*, Paideia : Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2015), 122.

⁶⁷ Oakes says regarding the end of the Mosaic law: "Not only does the law arrive late; it also leaves again when the promise is fulfilled." This argument provides the ground for another argument of the reason, why the law has been added. It may have been given to provide the way for the coming of the Messiah. Dealing with transgression would have then only been part of the central goal of the temporal, Mosaic law. Ibid., 123.

⁶⁸ scholars, even such as, Douglas J. Moo who approaches the Bible as a harmonic unit, believe in an eternal Law within the Mosaic law, but acknowledge only nine of the ten commandments as "binding on New Testament believers", based on the assumption that the NT only refers to nine out of ten as still valid. Moo presents his belief the following: "The 'law' under which Christians live is continuous with the Mosaic law in that God's eternal moral norms, which never change, are clearly expressed in both. But there is discontinuity in the fact that Christians live under the 'law of Christ' and not under the Mosaic law. Our source for determining God's eternal moral law is Christ and the apostles, not the Mosaic law or even the Ten Commandments." He believes representative for many, that Paul is referring to "the commandments of

3:21). Because there has never existed any law “which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law” (Gal 3:21). This statement shows again, that there has never been something like righteousness through works in any law system in the OT that God installed.

Each law given showed that people are under sin, but the law has always been based on the foundation of faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:22). That faith was foreshadowed in the law. That’s why Paul argues that “before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed” (Gal 3:23). Before faith in Christ could appear, the Israelites have been “kept under the law.” For what reason have they been kept under the law? To keep the faith in a coming Redeemer alive: A faith in the Messiah who would later be revealed. That faith was symbolized in the whole system of sanctuary sacrifice. It is what Paul calls: shut up unto that law. Even though that system contained many works, it had been a system that was invented to point to the one who should come to save. The true faith could only come when Christ would die and

Christ and the apostles" when he says in 1 Cor 7:19 "keeping God's commands is what counts." Still, his argumentation lacks in several aspects: When he refers to the Law of Christ, separating it from the ten commandments, he misses, for example, the important circumstance that it was Christ himself who wrote such laws with his finger into the tables of Stone. It is therefore apparent that, when Christ is talking about 'his law', he refers to the ten commandments, which he gave as 'eternal' law for this earth. In line with this, some verses in the Gospels mention Jesus keeping the Sabbath, while none indicates him replacing it. Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 89. – others as J.C. Masee spiritualize the command, taking only spiritualized concepts of the entire 10 Commandments into consideration, whereby the Sabbath remains important as a spiritual concept, while its position as the seventh day in the week is neglected. J. C. Masee, *The Gospel in the Ten Commandments* (Butler, IN: The Higley Press, 1871), 57–69. “The expression translated “under the law [ennomos] of Christ" literally means something like "in-lawed to Christ." In other words, the ultimate will of God is seen only in Christ." Ivan T. Blazen, “Christ Our Law,” *Spectrum*, AUT 2013, 14. White believes that this eternal law refers to the 10 commandments: “But concerning the law of Ten Commandments the psalmist declares, “Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven.” Psalm 119:89. And Christ Himself says, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law... Verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” Matthew 5:17, 18. Here He teaches that the claims of God's law should hold as long as the heavens and the earth remain.” Ellen Gould Harmon White, *From Eternity Past* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1983), 255.

resurrect. But before that faith would come, the temporal law of Moses would keep the Israelites in a system of faith that would retain them prepared for the arrival of Christ.

That's why Paul calls the temporal law a "schoolmaster to us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Gal 3:24). Paul shows that that temporal law has been necessary to prepare the coming of Christ. It was training the nation to understand and believe what salvation is about. Paul says that the purpose of that schoolmaster was to prepare the nation to be "justified by faith." The law itself was not of faith, but it trained faith in the people of Israel. Its purpose was to prepare them so that they would believe when the savior would appear.⁶⁹ The goal of the law, Paul shows, was to ensure and educate in justification by faith (Gal 3:24). That was a workout, a preparation for a certain event, but after that event took place, the tool to prepare for it was not necessary anymore.

The law was needed to keep the people reminded that the savior would come; it was needed for the people of Israel to believe when the time was there. That tool ended with Christ's death and resurrection. The law of preparation found its fulfillment in Christ. It was the moral, social and ceremonial tool to prepare a nation for a special service to the world. It was a shadow, a reminder, but could not show the fullness which would be revealed in Jesus Christ.

Paul concludes, that the schoolmaster's job finished when Christ came. From there on the special role of the schoolmaster and the special calling of the people chosen for schooling and preparation ended. Since Christ appeared the law came to its

⁶⁹ "God imposed the custodianship of the law not simply 'until' faith in Christ arrived but 'with a view to' that eschatological climax." Moo, *Galatians*, 243.

fulfillment. Belonging would be achieved by faith in Christ. Preparation for that event and all things connected with it were not necessary anymore. The original promise given to Adam and Abraham found its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In accepting him, people of all nationalities would be equal and accepted by faith in him (Gal 3:28). Since the promise given to Abraham has been fulfilled in Christ, who is the seed promised to Abraham, all people who would, from now on, belong to Christ would be part of the seed of Abraham, since when they “have been baptized into Christ [they] have put on Christ” (Gal 3:27,29).⁷⁰

What does it mean that the law has been fulfilled in Christ? The entire law was linked to the promise of the coming Messiah, when he arrived, these preparatory regulations lost their purpose and found their fullness in Christ. All regulations were initiated to find their peak in him.

The Mosaic Law as an Element of the World

Paul continues in chapter 4 with practical examples to clarify what he just explained in the third chapter. He begins in Gal 4:1 to compare the Law and the promise with a slave and a child, explaining that there is no difference between a young child and a slave, even though the child has the promise to own everything. Paul describes that child, having the promise to become heir one day, as being under the guidance of “tutors”

⁷⁰ Additional on the temporal Law, sandwiched by two covenantal promises: “the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants differ from each other in form. The Abrahamic covenant is a ‘promise-covenant’ in that God made the promise and swore to fulfill it (Gen. 22:16-17). The Mosaic covenant (e.g., Ex. 24) is a ‘law-covenant’ in that God made the promise and Israel made an oath to keep God’s law. The law-covenant is ‘an administration of God’s lordship, consecrating a people to himself under the sanctions of divine law.’ [...] In comparison with the Abrahamic promise-covenant, the Mosaic law-covenant is inferior; it is an ‘administration of law, bondage, condemnation, and death.’ Consequently, the Mosaic era as a law-covenant is a parenthesis, being wedged in between two promise-covenants: the Abrahamic and the new covenant.” Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 48–49.

(Gal 4:2), until the day to receive the sonship has come. Such entering in the privileges of his sonship is reached at a certain point in time.

Paul compares that point in time with the promised fulfillment of time-prophecy, by which he probably refers to the exact fulfillment of the 70 weeks in Daniel 9:4. However, Paul clarifies that a time in salvation history of the world had been set. The entire frame of being under the tutorship of the law was built on the covenant made at Mount Sinai in which Israel was trained and prepared to receive the sonship. That sonship was a promise not only to the seed of Abraham but through his descendants, a promise to the entire world. That is why Paul while addressing the Galatians which previously “did service unto them which by nature are no gods,” can apply the promised sonship on them as well (Gal 4:5-8).

These former heathens, who used to worship other gods were included in the promise given to Abraham. They belonged to the chosen group and were as any other men on earth under the condemnation of the law. Even though they probably did not know about the law, they have still been enslaved by its condemnation. In their specific case, the enslavement took place in form of their service to the “elements of the world” (Gal 4:3) and to other gods (Gal 4:8). Those practices stood in absolute contrast to the law of God and took them into bondage.

Paul tells them that they were set free from any kind of such worldly bondage when they received Christ, who appeared at the foretold time. They have been children of the promise, even though that promise only approached them indirectly. And by their acceptance of Christ, they were called into the promised sonship which sets free from the condemnation of the law, from their former bondage and from the observance of the

Mosaic law. That Mosaic law is also described as “principles of the world” (Gal 4:9) by Paul.⁷¹

Did he express his belief in the abolishment of the law by that statement? No, he did not. He simply repeated some thoughts he discussed earlier. The Mosaic law found its fulfillment in Christ.⁷² If people still cling to the laws practices as a way of salvation, while they were designed to prepare the way for the Messiah, then this would be an expression of unbelief. From the time the Messiah appeared the observance of practices that pointed to Christ became empty and void and fell in a similar category with the wrong ways of worship the heathen used to do. The system God had introduced for a certain time period became a religion of slavery when obligatorily practiced after it fulfilled its purpose.

Those who were called to be sons of Christ accepted him and received the sonship, but those who rejected him belonged to the group which was foreseen as slaves and not as sons under the promise to become heirs. Paul explains how the law given at Mount Sinai has been given as a tutor to prepare the child for the inheritance of the

⁷¹ In this verse, Paul is placing the former pagan service of the heathen on one level with the keeping of OT laws for salvation purposes. See Moo: “Here in Galatians he [Paul] virtually equates Judaism with heathenism. To go forward into Judaism is to go backward into heathenism.” [C. K. Barrett, *Freedom and Obligation: A Study of the Epistle to the Galatians* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1985), 61.] Some interpreters, however, take this too far, claiming that Paul in effect demonizes the law, putting its observance in the same category as the pagan religions of his day [...]. So strong a conclusion, however, goes too far. Paul is pulling out all the rhetorical stops to convince the Galatians not to take what he views as a disastrous step. To accomplish this, he implies that putting themselves under the law, since the era of the law has ended with the coming of the promised Seed, is akin to returning to their impotent pagan religions.” Moo, *Galatians*, 277.

⁷² A couple of scholars argue that Paul is expressing the inauguration of a new area with Christ. While some argue in a dispensational sense, saying that the new dispensation began with Christ, others believe in a new era in the sense of covenant changes that took place with Christ's ascension to heaven. For more information see: Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 174; Troy Martin, “Apostasy to Paganism: The Rhetorical Stasis of the Galatian Controversy,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 114, no. 3 (1995): 437–461.

promise. But even that tutor was built on the promise of sonship that has been given previously to Abraham. Paul shows that Jesus who was born under the regulations of the law given at the Mount Sinai and therefore grown up under the Mosaic system that God initiated at Sinai, came to fulfill that system in himself.

All Israelite festivals given in that old system as a reminder of the coming of Christ remained beautiful practices, which could still be celebrated, but they had no more value in the plan of salvation.⁷³ Why were those people enslaved under the law, but free in Christ? Because the keeping of the Mosaic ordinances expressed Israel's believe and love in the coming savior. Israelites lived in the state of a promised sonship, which they could not attain, as long as the Messiah did not come and fulfill the promised salvation plan in himself.

The Mosaic practices prior to their fulfillment in Christ have only been a shadow of the things which were to come through Christ. The ministry in the sanctuary of the Mosaic covenant took place on earth and was therefore earthly, even though in close relation to heavenly things. When Jesus appeared, these earthly ordinances or, as Paul puts it the "elements of the world" (Gal 4:3, 9) were removed. Christ overtook that task and went with it to heaven. Earthly services were not needed anymore since Christ could be approached directly without symbolic services and orders.⁷⁴

⁷³ See further information in Jacques B. Doukhan, "Should We Observe the Levitical Festivals?: A Seventh-Day Adventist Perspective - Part 1," *Ministry Magazine* Levitical Festivals, no. April (April 2010), accessed March 26, 2018, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2010/04/levitical-festivals-1>. "Now that the sacrifices are no longer possible because of the absence of the temple, and because prophecy contained within the sacrifices has been fulfilled in Christ, it follows that sacrifices and related rituals, such as Levitical festivals, are no longer mandatory. The type has met the Antitype. To engage in festivals with the idea that they are compulsory for our own salvation makes the Antitype, the Messiah, altogether irrelevant."

⁷⁴ For further information see Richard M. Davidson, "Typology and the Levitical System - 1," *Ministry*, no. February (February 1984): 16–30.

All those things found their fullness in Christ. He lifted them up, which made the entire Mosaic system unnecessary for salvation. To continue keeping these ordinances would not have been a problem, but Paul fought against the belief that these Mosaic practices are still needed to achieve salvation. That is why he asks the Galatians, why they turn “again to the weak and beggarly elements,” which put them “in bondage” (Gal 4:9).

The Bondmaid and the Freewoman

That entire idea is summarized by Paul in his allegory about the bondmaid and the freewoman. He uses the bondwoman Hagar as an example for the children born of mistrust. The unbelief of Abraham brought up a son which was not the son that had been promised by God. That descendant was born of the flesh, representing unbelief. Paul compares this with the Jews that rejected the Messiah. They are not partakers of the promise since they rejected the promised. In that way, they remain in bondage without any remaining promise.

Paul compares that bondwoman with the freewoman. The freewoman stands for those who had faith. They accepted the promised and receive the promise, therefore they are free. The comparison Paul is doing here refers to previous explanations he gave in the letter to the Galatians. He explained in 3:19 that the Mosaic law has been given because of transgression. It afterwards remained for some time, until the original promise and covenant given to Abraham should be fulfilled in Christ. He shows that that story had allegorically been foretold by Abrahams life.⁷⁵

⁷⁵ See also George, *Galatians*, 334–340., understanding the passage as an analogy, rather than an allegory. He links the fact that one of Abrahams sons is described as promised, while the other not, with the two covenants: "one derived from Mount Sinai and capable of bearing children destined only to be slaves;

Abraham received the promise of a son. He showed unbelief and bore a son which had not been part of the promise. That son became the lineage holder until the promise would be fulfilled in the birth of the promised son in which the further promise of salvation should find its final fulfillment. The comparison between Abrahams life and the covenants is not explicit and cannot be arbitrarily extended. It just serves as an illustration of Paul, that's why he calls it an allegory.

He finishes his allegory with the call to cast out the bondwoman. Those who are not of the promise and confuse the church of the Galatians with ideas that do not match the fulfillment of the promise in Jesus Christ are not partakers of the new covenant. Paul explains that they, therefore, cannot be part of the family of faith. Their actions are a continual expression of unbelief in the saving blood of Christ.

Under the Spirit and not Under the Law

Paul moves on with his clarification on the Law. In Gal 5:3 he explains that each person that continues to keep being circumcised, because he believes, that this practice is still necessary to be part of the covenant, is called to keep the entire law. Paul is showing the link between circumcision, being the covenantal sign until the promised would come, and the entire Mosaic law. The circumcision is directly linked to the time of the pending promise. It is the earthly sign, of changing the heart by cutting the earthly flesh. This has been replaced by the heavenly sign of baptism, the spiritual death in Christ as a heavenly symbol of death (cutting the flesh) and resurrection with a new heart. The second is built

the other, the covenant of grace sealed in the blood of Christ, the only foundation for real freedom and release from sin and death." He also presents another interpretation from F. Thielman who interprets "bearing children for slavery as a reference to slavery to sin rather than slavery to the law itself."

on the fulfilled promise, while the first, the circumcision is built on the pending promise that still has to be fulfilled.⁷⁶

That is the reason why Paul continues in Gal 5:4, to explain the Galatians that being circumcised is an expression of unbelief that the Messiah already came. His deed will be of no effect, since their deeds express, that they are still waiting for the promised. To continue to have faith in those practices means to have no faith in Christ, what again results in their exclusion from the promised grace in Christ. Circumcision or uncircumcision is of no value to God anymore (Gal 5:6).

Paul goes on to explain that the Galatians are "called unto liberty" (Gal 5:13). That liberty is further explained in Gal 5:18: "but if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law." And he moves on in Gal 5:19 and the following that if the Spirit lives in the heart of a person he simply will not follow the desires of the flesh, but the Spirit will develop in that person the fruits that are in accordance with the law. The law will be written in the heart of such person. If the Spirit lives in a follower of Christ, Christ's love will be perfected in that person, and if Christ's love, which is the foundation of all OT laws, is written in the heart, that person will live according to the impressions of the Spirit of God.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ This interpretation is based on clear-cut biblical interpretations from Paul in e.g. Col 2:11; Gal 3:6-9; Rom 2:25-29; 4:1-12; Eph 2:11-13 and supported by many renown scholars of which some are listed in Garrett, *Systematic Theology*, 504–505.

⁷⁷ Meyer summarizes this issue of being under the Spirit and not under the law, but still bound to the law in a brilliant way: "Stephen Westerholm [Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The "Lutheran" Paul and His Critics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), 432 his entire summary: 431-439.] has moved the discussion forward by rightly pointing out that Paul can simultaneously affirm that Christians 'fulfil' (pleroo) the law (Rom 8:4; 13:8,10; Gal 5:14) even though they are no longer 'under the law' (Rom 6:14-15; Gal 5:18). Paul declares that believers are not under the law because they have 'died' to it (Rom 7:4,6) and been 'redeemed' (Gal 4:5) or 'set free' (Rom 7:6) from it. Therefore, even though those who are 'under the law' are obligated to 'do' (poieo) its commands (Rom 10:5; Gal 3:10; 5:3), Paul does not command believers to 'do' (poieo) the law. In other words, Paul does not prescribe Christian behavior with reference to the law; he describes the 'fruit' (karpos) of their behavior with a retroactive reference to the way that it conforms to the law and thus amounts to its 'fulfilment'

Therefore, Paul can say that the law is fulfilled in the love to the neighbor (Gal 5:14). To love the neighbor as thyself again is only possible through the grace of God and the love towards God. Without the love towards God, His Spirit cannot dwell in the person's heart, and without His Spirit no fruits of the Spirit and no true love, but the lust of the flesh. God designed only the Ten Commandments as rules for Israel. Those were in the Ark of the Covenant and have been written by His finger. All other precepts should result from them. Still many more had to be added due to transgression.⁷⁸

According to Paul God did not desire to build a whole catalog of laws, but due to the lack of love towards God, people failed in their love towards each other and God had to add further laws as a result of hardheartedness and transgression. The people of Israel were to become a nation of priests, which would be able to apply the Ten Commandments in connection with the Spirit of God. God would lead and educate them in accordance with His precepts. Since the Israelites failed to have that living connection the Mosaic laws had to be added as an extension, which is expressed by their position in the sanctuary. They were placed next to the Ark of the Covenant. This makes sense in the light of Galatians 3, in which Paul explains such commands as temporal. Placing them next to the arc of covenant provides the OT type/symbolism for Paul's argumentation that

(pleroo). Ironically and paradoxically, those who live under the law bear fruit resulting in sinful passions, the transgression of the law, and death, while those who have died to the law bear fruit that amounts to the law's fulfillment." This passage is a summary of Westerholm's original, done by Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 282–283.

⁷⁸See T. Godfrey, "The Eternal Law of God," *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* Volume 94, No.33, no. August 16 (August 16, 1917): 11. He argues that there is an eternal law of God, which contains the two commandments: Love to God and Love to the neighbor. The 10 Commandments already present an extended version of these original two commandments, which present an adaption to the fallen world. Such laws written by the finger of God in plates of stone have been the central aspects on which all other Mosaic laws were built on.

the Mosaic laws have just been an addition for a certain time.⁷⁹ These were only needed because of Israel's desire to follow own ways, rather than God's principles of love. Therefore, more detailed regulations were needed. If His commandments would have been understood in love to God and to the neighbor, no extension would have been necessary.⁸⁰ Egoism, selfishness and rebellion against the guidance of God forced them to give them further instructions, in order not to totally misuse and misinterpret His precepts.

Paul shows that when Christ appeared, all these laws that dealt with the hardheartedness of Israel had been put aside. That still does not mean that those laws are a problem or hindering. They only become a problem, if those who pointed to Christ will

⁷⁹Additional to that though; Braaten shows the superiority of the 10 Commandments in five brief arguments and proofs thereby how they differ from other laws, which can be regarded as additional. "For scholar and general reader of the Old Testament alike, it is clear that the Ten Commandments are unique in their context. Unlike the more than six hundred laws mediated by Moses, these ten are given directly by God. God spoke these words directly to the people of Israel, instilling in them awe and reverence; they knew with whom they had to do and thereafter asked that Moses might speak for God to them. Second, the Ten Commandments are repeated in nearly explicit form in Deuteronomy. [...] Third, the Decalogue is in a distinct apodictic (ungrounded 'though shall not') style, and in clipped form. Fourth, these laws stand at the head of all that follows, giving rise no doubt to the later concept of certain laws being foundational or summaries of the others, upon which they hang. Fifth, these laws are generated out of divine compassion, linked to the deliverance out of Egypt. Law is a gift here, born out of God's saving and identifying purpose. The motive for their giving belongs integrally with them. In both Deuteronomy and Exodus, the Ten Commandments stand in a signal position within the dramatic flow of the narrative and at the dramatic moment of deliverance and set-apartness." Carl E. Braaten and Christopher R. Seitz, eds., *I Am the Lord Your God: Christian Reflections on the Ten Commandments* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2005), 29.

⁸⁰ Brown mentions regarding the different origin and value of such sources and their designed task given by God: "The precepts of the Decalogue differ from the other precepts of the Law in that the former, as is stated, were given directly by God to the people, while the latter were given by Moses as intermediary. [...] Thus two kinds of precepts are not comprised in the Decalogue: the primary and general which, being inscribed in natural reason as self-evident, need no further promulgation, such as that one should do evil to no one, and others such; and those which are found, on careful examination on the part of wise men, to be in accord with reason-these are received by the people from God by instruction from the wise. [...] As is clear from what we have said, the judicial and ceremonial precepts derive their force solely from their institution; since, before they were instituted, it seemed a matter of indifference what form they should take. But the moral precepts derive their force from the dictate of natural reason, even if they had not been expressed in the Law." William P. Brown, ed., *The Ten Commandments: The Reciprocity of Faithfulness*, 1st edition., Library of theological ethics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004), 51+59.

still be enforced on believers as a necessity to achieve righteousness. Such righteousness would not be the righteousness of “Glaubensgehorsam” (deeds of faith) in the coming Redeemer but would be grounded on own merits. Since Jesus already came to fulfill the law, such lack of faith would keep away His redeeming grace.

Besides those previously mentioned principles/laws, Paul added in Gal 5:18 that only those led by the Spirit are not under the law anymore. Why is he narrowing it here? It is simply because those who are under the guidance of the Spirit will not transgress the law. The Spirit, that rules in their heart does not allow them to do so. Paul already said in Rom 8:13,14 and repeats later in Gal 5:24 that those who live in the Spirit have crucified the flesh. They hate the transgression and love the law of God.⁸¹ Live in the Spirit is in total accordance with the law (Gal 5:22-23), which Paul also calls spiritual. All those who do not walk in the Spirit “shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” Neither will those who

⁸¹ See Das on Gal 5:17: "The flesh's actions are countered by the overwhelming power of the Spirit to which the Christian has immediate access. Christians have a power available to them in their ongoing personal struggle that is not accessible through the Mosaic Law. The Spirit neutralizes the flesh's attack. Paul's exhortations, therefore, assume what is genuinely possible for the Spirit-empowered Christian. [...] Paul is assuring the believer here not of an automatic triumph but of the access and availability of decisive power in the struggle. That power comes through faith's reliance upon the Spirit and a steadfast focus on Christ's victory on the cross. [...] Paul considers it crucial to keep reminding his hearers of that decisive, cosmic victory wrought at Calvary (cf. Gal 3:3). That must be the constant focus." Das, *Galatians*, 565–566. Ambrosiaster describing the struggle between Spirit and flesh in Gal 5:17-18: "Paul posits two laws [...]. One of these is the law of God, the other is the law of sin. The latter is in the flesh because it lusts after sin by taking delight in visible things, and with these opposed to him, the average person does things which he does not want to do. The divine law clamps down on this and drives out the law of sin by advising people to follow the strength of their nature and not be captivated by wicked things. The law of sin, on the other hand, works insidiously and afflicts people with temptations, so that they reject the commandments of the divine law. Therefore when a person submits to the law of God, the law of sin counterattacks by trying to persuade him not to do what the divine law commands. But the law of God works against this by calling him back and telling him not to do what the law of sin suggests, which the person concerned does not find absurd because he knows that it is in his nature to do what the law of God commands, and in the end he is glad when he does it. But if he does what the law of sin suggests, he is ashamed and horrified afterwards. Therefore the commands of the law of this Spirit are to be kept and those of the flesh are to be avoided. Even his conscience accuses him if he agrees to the law of sin because it knows how terrible what it suggests is. [...] It is clear that anyone who is led by the Holy Spirit will not go astray. The law rules over those who err, as it says elsewhere: The law is not laid down for the just." Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians-Philemon*, 29–30.

do not keep the law (John 5:2-4). They belong in the same category as Gal 5:19-21 shows.

Paul's explanation shows that every person is still called to keep the law. The moral issues of the law remain valid, for those under the flesh and those under the Spirit. People who are led by the Spirit will have the desire to live in accordance with the law of God. The condemnation of the law is not upon them. The guidance of the Spirit in their lives is their insurance that Christ's blood is shed for them. The willingness to humble themselves under Christ's guidance, shown by the Spirits working, keeps them in harmony with the will of God. They will not be judged by the letter of the law since they walk, impressed by the Spirit, in constant connection with their Redeemer who is always willing to reveal their sins and lead them to repentance. Being led by the Spirit means to live by faith in the redeeming grace of Christ, expressed in the desire and action to do His will.

Opposite to them are those who are of the flesh. Even though they may try to keep some laws, they will not be able, since the Spirit who reveals the true meaning of the law is not the one directing them. They may let themselves be circumcised and keep all kind of laws but will still be considered as transgressors. They are not guided by the redeeming grace of Christ and therefore under the Spirit. The result is that they stand under the condemnation of the letter. Paul is warning the Galatians here not to fall into that trap.

He shows that Christ has fulfilled the law through His sacrifice. From now on people should see Him as the crucified in every law. People should desire to follow Him as the loving God, who redeemed them and not to look at a letter by which a person may try to gain live. Paul shows that the letter alone has nothing to offer. The letter must be

understood in the Spirit of Christ, that is, in connection with Him. He is the way, the truth, and the life and He alone will lead into all truth. Biblical truth is always linked to the source of truth, which is Christ. That source of truth is spiritual and is able to accomplish, what the letter alone cannot do. In this way, Paul explains how Christ fulfilled the law spiritually.

Spirit versus Flesh Regarding the Fulfillment of the Law

In the 6th chapter of his letter to the Galatians, Paul sums the whole issue on the law up. He describes the outcome of the Spirit, which is to bear one another's burdens (Gal 6:2), being humble (Gal 6:3), serving one another (Gal 6:6-7), etc. It finds its peak in Gal 6:8: "he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Those who desire to be circumcised only show that they want to boast with the things of the flesh (Gal 6:12), but even though they are circumcised, they don't keep the law (Gal 6:13).

Paul is showing the contradiction. Those people who enforce others to get circumcised nurse their flesh by doing so. They show by their deeds that they are not led by the lawgiver, whose Spirit alone leads to the right understanding of the law, which is spiritual.⁸²

Through his presentation of this fact, Paul shows that even though those people try to appear as law keepers, may still do the opposite in their desire to keep a past law.

⁸² Meyer argues that Paul is addressing covenantal changes, showing the contrast between the old covenant, which "operates in the power of the flesh" and the new covenant, which "operates in the power of the promise and the Spirit and therefore creates children of spiritual freedom. Paul also connects the new covenant with the gospel as the fulfillment of the foundational Abrahamic promises (Gal 3:16-17)." Meyer's explanation definitely proves true for the time of the NT after Christ's fulfillment of the law. For OT times it only matches, if his expression of the children of Israel as "children of spiritual slavery" would be interpreted as a reference to their bound to the sacrificial system, since they also depended on the guidance of the Spirit, as many OT texts (especially in Psalms show). Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 175.

The only thing they show is that the Spirit of God does not live in their hearts yet so that they nourish the flesh, rather than the Spirit. It is the attempt to keep an outward code, without proper observation of the law-givers intention and guidance.

In Paul's Letter to the Ephesians

Lawful Separation Between Heathen and Jews Fulfilled

In Ephesians 2 Paul is referring to the difference that used to exist between heathen and the nation of Israel, which was chosen to provide the way for the Messiah. Paul explains to the Gentiles that they have been regarded as “uncircumcised” in those days (Eph 2:11). Through his use of the term uncircumcised, he expresses that they have not been part of that chosen nation. Even though they could have become part of Israel in those past days, it would have only been possible through a process of integration into the Jewish way of life, which would include circumcision and the keeping of all kind of Jewish festivals and practices. The Non-Israelites, therefore, have not had any part of “the covenants of promise” (Eph 2:12).⁸³

Through the promised seed of Abraham, the whole world was to be blessed, but until that blessing should find its fullness in Christ's death and resurrection, the Israelites

⁸³ Eph 2:12 lists five issues which the Gentiles did not have. They were 1st outside of Christ “Paul speaks here of the promise of the Messiah in Israel's Scripture (cf. Rom. 9:5).”; 2nd alienated from Israel's way of life. Alienate “refers to separation [...] in Ephesians, specifically of Gentiles from the life that God gives (Eph. 4:18)”; 3rd the covenants of promise. “Israel's possession of ‘the covenants of promise’ was a significant privilege because these covenants marked out the pathway of God's saving purposes (cf. Rom. 3:2; 9:4; 2 Tim. 3:15). Gentiles, because of their position outside Israel, had no access to Israel's Scriptures and therefore no clear access to the saving purposes of God.”; 4th without hope. “The present tense of the participle [echontes] implies that outside Israel and before the coming of the gospel to them, Gentiles constantly existed in a state of hopelessness. [...] their future held only ‘the wrath of God’ that ‘comes upon the sons of disobedience’ (5:6; cf. 2:2 and the notes on 1:13).”; 5th without God in the world. “It means living as one of the ‘sons of disobedience’ and therefore under the sway both of this world with its tendency toward evil and of the prince of the demonic real, the devil himself.” Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker exegetical commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 154–157.

were not called to active missionary activity but rather encouraged to stay separated from the Gentiles.

Deut 7:3-4 clearly points out that there should be no intermarriage, with the pagan nations living in Israel at that time. The reason is explained in Eph 2:4. The intermarriage would lead the Israelites to worship other gods. That would kindle the anger of God against his nation and would bring judgment upon them. There are several other texts referring to the same issue in different situations of Israel. Abraham warned his son not to intermarry with people of different faith, but to take somebody from his own house (Gen 24:1-4). A similar situation is directly or indirectly mentioned in Ezra 9:12; 1 Kgs 11:1-5; in the book of Joshua, and in many other books of the OT.

The same principle is also found in the NT. Paul calls the Corinthians not to intermarry (2 Cor 6:14-16). The issue of intermarriage, had historically been a major problem among the children of God. Paul shows that the same problem still exists in the NT. Why then is Paul addressing the issue of circumcised and uncircumcised people⁸⁴ in a way as if there would not be any more differences between them? The ongoing verses give an explanation. In Eph 2:12 Paul shows, that the Gentiles had been somehow excluded from the chosen nation of God. It was a separation that should keep the nation of Israel pure from heathen influences in order not to destruct them from their task, to prepare the first coming of Christ.

⁸⁴ See Lemke for an interesting connection between circumcised and uncircumcised people in the NT in connection to circumcision and uncircumcision in heart in the OT Lemke, "Circumcision of the Heart: The Journey of a Biblical Metaphor," 299–319.

But when Christ came, he “made nigh” those who “were far off” (Eph 2:13).⁸⁵ Here Paul is referring to the same issue he previously explained in Romans chapter 9-11. It is a historical presentation of the salvation plan. The Israelites have been the chosen nation, but through the blood of Christ changes appeared. Israel had been established under the Mosaic law and covenantal task to prepare the way for the Messiah. This had been fulfilled in the appearance of the Messiah, and the accomplishment of His mission. Even though the state of Israel lost its importance due to their rejection of the Messiah, the special calling for Israel (but from now on through the spiritual Israel) remained but found its fulfillment.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Lincoln shows that “the language of coming near undergoes a transformation [he argues that prior verses refer to proselytes]. Because of Christ’s work, it can be used of Gentiles in general, not simply of proselytes to Judaism. As the rest of the passage will show, it does not mean that these Gentile Christians, like proselytes, have now become members of the commonwealth of Israel, but rather that they have become members of a newly created community whose privileges transcend those of Israel’s, as vv 19-22, in particular, make apparent. In addition, in the coming near [...], there are of course no special conditions to be fulfilled since all that is necessary has already been accomplished through Christ’s sacrificial death [...] through the blood of Christ.” Andrew T. Lincoln et al., *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 42 (Waco, TX: Word Books, Publisher, 2005), 139.

⁸⁶ While many parts of the covenant have been fulfilled in Christ, the covenant itself did not lose its value but continued in a fulfilled way. See e.g. McComiskey: “The sequential structure of the administrative covenants does not negate the validity of the Old Testament as God’s word to the present. The Old Testament continues to speak to mankind under the new covenant. If it did not, how else may we explain the numerous references of New Testament writers to that old covenant? They appeal to it for objective truth, for argumentative support, for comfort, for exhortation. Surely these appeals cannot be explained adequately by the need to accommodate their Jewish readers to whom the Old Testament was the sole repository of God’s word. This does not adequately explain Paul’s use of the example of Abraham’s faith to expound justification. The faith of Abraham was objective fact, derived exegetically from the Old Testament; it was not merely illustrative material that gave a Jewish aura to what was only a Christian concept. The new covenant itself witnesses to the divine authority of the Old Testament and attests to its continuing validity.” Thomas Edward McComiskey, *The Covenants of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 226. This biblical principle of understanding the covenant impacts the entire way someone will regard and approach the OT Law. A misunderstood idea about the continuity of the covenant is of a wide-reaching impact on the entire reading of God’s word.

Some of the Israelites who accepted the Messiah were chosen and trained by himself to become the 12 fathers of a new nation. A nation without land, whose father and King would be Christ himself.⁸⁷

By the sharing of His blood, Christ “hath broken down the middle wall of partition” between Israelites and pagans.⁸⁸ The covenant with Israel as a nation, entrusted to conduct the temple service ended, when Christ Himself became the true High Priest. The mission of the nation of Israel became the mission of a nation without land and nationality, accepting the Messiah’s first coming and preparing for His return, by which He promised to take them to their actual home, the new Jerusalem.

With Christ, the Mosaic ordinances found their fulfillment and the instructions that had been ordained to prepare His first coming were fulfilled in His blood. With this in mind, Paul moves on to Eph 2:15, explaining that Christ “abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make in himself of twain [two] one new man, so making peace.” He does not contradict Jesus in Matt 5:17 but explains the fulfillment differently by using a Greek term which could be translated with ‘abolishment’, or ‘to render something ineffective’.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ See Wenkel, arguing that Luke 22:28-30 (the promised kingship of the Apostles) has to be understood as already and not yet. He argues that their rulership began on earth as the continuation of former Israel, while the promise will reach its total fulfillment in the afterlife. "The Twelve apostles became kings or co-regents after Jesus' resurrection; they have already begun to take up their thrones." David H Wenkel, "When the Apostles Became Kings: Ruling and Judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel in the Book of Acts," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (August 2012): 121.

⁸⁸ Many theologians believe that the ‘divided wall, the fence,’ “points to the temple balustrade, [which] symbolizes the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.” See them listed in Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan exegetical commentary series on the New Testament volume 10 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 161.

⁸⁹ Paul uses the Greek word *katargh, saj* which comes from *katarge, w* here. Such can also be translated as ‘render ineffective’. The word *katalu, w* which Jesus used in Matt 5:17 is a much stronger expression, which can also mean ‘destroy’, ‘tear down’, or ‘stop’. Arnold argues that the expression of removal of the enmity and the law means, that the “Mosaic covenant is no longer in force” and therefore “no longer an obstacle. Gentiles have free and equal access to the Father on the basis of the

The ordinances to prepare the first coming of Christ have been fulfilled in Christ, they have been lifted to another level. It is not anymore one local nation that is chosen for the special task to present the salvation plan to the world, but it is a global one from all kind of tongues and peoples which form the nation of Christ to fulfill His plan for this world. That what has been two before, one being circumcised, the others being uncircumcised became one in the baptism in the name of Christ. The boundaries were removed, and all who belong to Christ became part of the Children of God as if that rule would have been totally abolished. In this way Eph 2:16 explains that God reconciled Israelites and pagans to one body “by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” The prophetic promise, that the pagans will become part of Israel, which had been out of view for a long time, found its fulfillment in Christ (Rom 9:24-29). However, the general principle of circumcised people, which are now represented by those who accepted Christ, and uncircumcised people, which are now all who do not belong to Christ remained, as Paul explains in 2 Cor 6:14-16.

In Paul’s First Letter to Timothy

End of the Law – No Separation Between Law and Lawgiver

Paul addresses the issue of the Law in the first chapter of his first letter to Timothy, first mentioned in 1 Tim 1:5. He refers to love as the end (*telos*, also translated

work of Christ and the presence of the Spirit. We must be careful, however, not to go too far and assume that the moral content of the Mosaic code is now irrelevant. To this extent, the older interpreters who made the ceremonial/moral distinction in the law were not too far off the mark. The Mosaic code was filled with commands that reflected the holiness of God and His expectation that His people would display that holiness in their lives (Lev 11:44-45). To the degree that the Mosaic laws give expressions to this, they are to be obeyed. This is why we find much of the moral teaching in Eph 4-6 corresponding to laws in the Torah.” Ibid., 163–164. Similar Ernest Best, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Ephesians* (London: T & T Clark, 2010), 259–263.

as “end-goal”) of the law. That is in total harmony with what Paul and the Bible taught in the previously observed books of the NT. All the law pointed to Christ, he is the goal of the law and the entire law finds its fulfillment in him. The law cannot be separated from the lawgiver. It is only a reflection and an expression of the law-givers character.⁹⁰ That is why the law is observed by Paul as a spiritual thing. It is not the letter by itself that gives meaning to the law, but the fact that this law is the fulfillment of the character of God. The law is written down to make people understand how God is.⁹¹ It shows personal errors and leads to see the beauty of God’s way of handling things, which is an expression of who he is. Such is the Spirit of the law and the reason why the letter of the law cannot accomplish anything good and worthy, if separated from the Spirit of the lawgiver. Man can keep the letter that was written down but still remain a transgressor of the law if his heart is not brought in harmony and obedience with the lawgiver.⁹²

⁹⁰ See White: “The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. “Love is the fulfilling of the law.” Romans 13:10. The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: “Thy law is the truth.” “all Thy commandments are righteousness.” Psalm 119:142, 172. And the apostle Paul declares: “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” Romans 7:12. Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.” Ellen Gould Harmon White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1911), 467.

⁹¹ “Jesus magnified the holiness and justice of the law by bearing its curse (see 2 Cor. 3:9-11). He explained the law’s meaning, He expressed its character, He embodied its duties, and He endured its penalty.” Reisinger, *The Law and the Gospel*, 36.

⁹² VanGemeran expands that thought in his articles section about the Law and the Spirit of Christ: “The moral law (he refers to the 10 Commandments) is still relevant as a mirror condemning our negative passions characteristic of the old man and as a mirror of God’s perfections (cf. Gal. 5:17-18). A Christian wars against and puts to death the old passions that are prohibited by the moral law: [...] He also develops new passions: [...]. The Spirit of Christ guides the Christian in all truth and godliness. However, the Spirit does not operate in a vacuum. He applies the word of God to the heart of the Christian who is in union with Christ. In this way, Christians grow in a new lifestyle that shows a concern for being in harmony with the will of God, by obedience to the law of God.” Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 41–42.

In this sense, Paul is addressing the teachers of the law in 1 Tim 1:7. They can be teachers of the law, but still do not know the law, since they don't live in a trustful, depending relationship of love with Christ, the lawgiver, in who the law finds its fullness.

The Law is Good if it is used Lawfully

Paul goes on to explain that “the law is good, if a man use[s] it lawfully” (1 Tim 1:8). That includes his following thought. The law is “not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners” (1 Tim 1:9). Paul proofs that the man who shows his knowledge of the law, living his life as an example of Christ’s righteousness in harmony with God’s law and being under the guidance of his Spirit, does not need the written law of God, he already has a desire for it and it is written on his heart. God’s promise of the Spirit connected with the trustful surrender of self towards Christ, leads the believer to willingly give himself under the control of the Spirit and therefore under the regulations of the law. The impressions of the Spirit will not be in contradiction with the written law. Law and Spirit are one source (the Law is spiritual Rom 7:14) and lead in the same direction. The righteous man desires the things of God. In the same time, he hates and rejects the things which are in contradiction towards God and His law.

When Paul says that a righteous man does not need the Law, he does not abolish it, but points to the Laws purpose (to reveal sin), earlier explained in Rom 7:7-25, such desire does not need to be awakened in the righteous. The desire to live a holy life according to the law is already existent in him.⁹³ The Law is originated to convict of sin

⁹³ “In saying that the law was not made for ‘the righteous,’ Paul was describing believers as the righteous. Committed believers do not need the law to propel them to holy living. They have pleasure in God’s law and have entered the sphere in which the promptings of the Holy Spirit spur them to obedience

and to direct the convicted to Christ (Rom 3:20-25). The righteous already acknowledged his wickedness and dependence on Christ. He put on Christ righteousness and walks under the guidance of the Spirit of God; whose guides in accordance with God's Law.⁹⁴

However, the man who lives in transgression of the law needs the law to realize his condemned situation. It is needed to open his eyes to acknowledge his forlornness. The realization of such may again drive him to Christ, in whose righteousness he can find salvation. The wicked man's actions are ruled by a different Spirit, following a different law. The Spirit that lives in him stands in open rebellion against God's Spirit and contradicts his law. Since he is not led by the Spirit, he will be unable to understand the things that are of spiritual concern (1 Cor 2:14), but he understands the condemnation of the written code, through which the Spirit gets an entry to his heart.⁹⁵ Through the observation of the law, he will learn the precepts according to which the Spirit of God works. He needs the law. It will help him to understand God and school him to get in harmony with the will of the Lord, it molds him in the ways of the Lord and works together with God's Spirit to make him understand the voice of the Lord.⁹⁶

(Gal 5:22-24)." Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary volume 34 (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992), 71.

⁹⁴ See Lea about the use of the law and Paul's accusation in 1 Tim 1:8 – the usages: "First, the Bible resembles a locked door to restrain individuals from trespassing onto the wrong territory (Rom 7:7; Ps 19:13). Second, the law resembles a mirror to reveal sin and lead us to Christ (Rom 3:19-20; Gal 3:24). Third, the law serves as a rule and guide to point out the works that please God (Rom 13:8-10). The errorists whom Paul was addressing did not know they needed restraint, a mirror for their sins, or a guide in life. They used the law as a launchpad to turn out spellbinding tales about ancestors and thereby robbed the law of its convicting power. If these teachers had used the law as a means of leading their hearers to Jesus, that would have been fine with Paul." *Ibid.*, 70–71.

⁹⁵ "the law makes sin known; it identifies evil behavior as a violation of God's covenant with His people (Rom. 7:7,13)." Raymond F. Collins, *1 & 2 Timothy and Titus: A Commentary*, 1st ed., The New Testament Library (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 29.

⁹⁶ The context of 1 Tim 1:5-11 shows that Paul is addressing a misuse of the law. People used it to argue about unimportant issues, and thereby forgot the laws original purpose. It is given to lead sinners to repentance. Such would be a lawful use of the law.

The problem Paul is addressing in this passage is not the abolishment of the law, but the wrong use of it. That is why he opened the passage with the explanation of a situation in which some brothers had vain discussions about the law (1 Tim 1:6-7) and desired to become teachers of the law. Such misunderstood and misused the law, that is why Paul mentions in the following verse (1 Tim 1:8) that the law is good, if used lawfully. Meaning, if it is used in the way God designed it to be used. He refers to those who misuse it and thereby make the law appear as not being good, which is wrong. After clarifying that the law is good, Paul explains, how it should be applied correctly. The lawful use of the law, Paul mentions, includes to approach and apply the law through the lenses, the interpretation and fulfillment of the lawgiver, Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER 4

ABOLISHMENT AND FULFILLMENT IN THE LETTER TO THE HEBREWS

Melchizedek, the Copy, and the True Covenant/Law

The previously discovered principles are further developed in the letter to the Hebrews. In the fifth, sixth and seventh chapter Paul is referring to Melchizedek as a type of Christ. He points back to Psalm 110:4, which prophesied that an eternal priest of Melchizedek's order has to appear. Moving on to explain that Melchizedek has been a priest external of the Israelites Sanctuary system, just as Christ has not been born in the priestly tribe of Levi and never worked as a priest in Israel's earthly sanctuary service. From here Paul links the issue of the priesthood with the covenant and the law. Since the OT sanctuary system and the priestly service in it had been highly interrelated with the law, Paul concludes that if the priestly service needs to be changed, the law needs to change as well (Heb 7:12).¹ And the fact that the priesthood needed to change proofs for

¹ See Davies: "Law and Levitical priesthood were interdependent, and stand or fall together: verse 12 draws a conclusion from this. It may more precisely mean that the Law depends on the priesthood, in the sense that the priests were necessary to carry out the Law's various instructions. [...] Since the Law and the Levitical priesthood are interdependent, a non-Levitical priest will bring a new, non-Levitical, Law. This suggests that the existing Law is ineffective." J. H. Davies, *A Letter to Hebrews*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 72.

Paul, that the OT sanctuary priesthood has not been perfect and needs to be replaced by a perfect priesthood, which from now on can be found in Christ priestly service in heaven.²

Paul shows Christ as the priest who did not become a priest according to the “law of a carnal commandment” (Heb 7:16). All of these arguments sound as if the former had been abolished in order to establish something totally new. But that is not what Paul is saying. Paul refers back to an older order. He shows that there has been a higher, eternal priesthood. That priesthood was “without beginning” (Heb 7:3) and therefore already in existence before the Abrahamic and the Mosaic covenant.³

The whole passage is linked to what has previously been investigated in the letter to the Galatians. Paul is referring back to the covenant that has been before the Mosaic law. After it, the Mosaic law has been installed for a short period. It was given as a copy of the heavenly sanctuary, shown to Moses at the mount (Exod 25:40; 26:30; Acts 7:44; Heb 8:5). Since it has only been a pattern of the true heavenly sanctuary in which Christ went to continue the true service, the old priesthood and sanctuary system had to be

² “Jesus heavenly priesthood cancels the basis of the earthly priesthood: its earthbound rules. And his very appointment implies that they were impotent and useless: that the Law (like the priesthood, verse 11) brought nothing to perfection. [...] Covenant (like ‘law’ in verse 12) is interdependent with priesthood: a greater priest brings a greater covenant. [...] the needs of man are perfectly met by Christ. In 2:10 it is man’s humanity that requires a human priest: here it is his sin, which requires (on the contrary) a sinless priest.” Ibid., 73–75.

³ See Guthrie on the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek: “The real key to the writer’s exegetical method is found in the phrase *resembling the Son of God*. The word translated *resembling* (*aphomoiomenos*) occurs only here in the New Testament. It is a suggestive word, used in the active of ‘a facsimile copy or model’ and in the passive of ‘being made similar to’. It is because Jesus Christ is of the order of Melchizedek that the representative of the order is seen to be a model of the true. In other words, it is Christ’s priesthood that is the standard, not that of Melchizedek. This passage comes close to being allegorical. Yet the important factor which the writer wishes to establish is the eternal priesthood of the Son of God rather than Melchizedek’s, although the latter is implied. What makes Melchizedek’s order perpetual is that Scripture says nothing about the succession. What makes Christ’s perpetual is, however, his own nature. The fulfillment is more glorious than the type. The title *Son of God* takes the thought back to 4:14 where Jesus our high priest is given this title (cf. also 6:6 and 10:29, both warning passages).” Donald Guthrie, *The Letter to the Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament commentaries (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1983), 157.

removed. It found its fulfillment in the true sanctuary in heaven (Heb 8:1-5), which is built on a better promise.⁴ The fulfilled promise that a Savior will come, die and resurrect for His people. The pattern on earth had not been perfect (Heb 7:11) and had, therefore, to be replaced by the perfect service, it was pointing to. It came to its fulfillment in Christ's service in the heavenly sanctuary.

Changes in the Covenant Result in Changes in the Law

(Heb 7:12) How did that take place? All laws that have been established in connection with the earthly sanctuary system vanish with its fulfillment. That “law made nothing perfect” (Heb 7:18-19). The entire sanctuary system, including the law, given for that covenant, was linked to the priestly service of mortal men but is now uplifted and based on Christ who serves not with the imperfect blood of animals, but with His own blood in the heavenly sanctuary service (Heb 7:27-28).

So, what remains? Everything remains, but every law given under the old covenant is lifted in its standard, as Matt 5 showed.⁵ The shadow and copy need to be

⁴ “What the ‘better promises’ are, he now proceeds to explain, by a contrast between their *diathkh* [covenant/testament] and its predecessor. The superiority of the new *diathkh* is shown by the fact that God thereby superseded the *diathkh* with which the Levitical cultus was bound up.” James Moffatt, *The Epistle to the Hebrews, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark LTD, 1986), 107. It shows that the entire changes that appear between the old and the new covenant hang on the changes, which appeared between the earthly and heavenly sanctuary and priesthood.

⁵ See Neall: “Thus, Jesus fulfilled the symbols of religion: temple, light, bread, water, and tabernacle. He was the reality to which the symbols pointed. [...] What effect did Jesus have on Moses? What happened to the symbols—animal sacrifices, feasts, and even the temple itself—with the coming of Jesus? These dropped off like faded flowers before the ripened fruit of the reality of Jesus. He Himself was the Lamb, Light, Water, and Temple to which the symbols pointed. How do “the mighty acts of God” in Creation, Exodus, and giving the law, relate to the coming of Jesus? Jesus repeats the mighty acts in greater grandeur—ultimate salvation and the re-creation of human beings. What about the glory of the revelations of God to Moses? These are the dawning rays leading to the sunrise of the glorious revelation of God in human flesh. The full blaze of His glory awaits His second coming when believers will see the glory that He had from the foundation of the world (17:24).” Beatrice Short Neall, “Moses and Jesus,” *Ministry*, April 2015, 26.

interpreted through the fulfillment in the perfect sacrifice and perfect sanctuary service of Christ. Each law has to be understood and approached by its foundational, original principle, which is expressed in the law of love towards God and the neighbor (Matt 22:34-40), reflected in the 10 Commandments, which have already been part of the eternal covenant, existing before Moses.⁶ While the law of Moses had been written by Moses and was placed next to the Arc of the Covenant, the 10 Commandments, written by God, were placed within the ark.

Since Heb 8:1-6 shows Jesus as the High Priest, serving at the original sanctuary of which the earthly has been “a copy and shadow” (Heb 8:5), the law of God (10 Commandments), remains the holiest part of the heavenly sanctuary system. That holy law of God is not removed or replaced but is written in people’s heart and presents the center of the new covenant God is doing with His people.⁷

The New Covenant and the Law Written on the Heart

Christ went to heaven to serve as heavenly High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. His service in heaven is the beginning of a new covenant service, which continues the old, imperfect service, in a perfect way. A central part of that new covenant is that God will now put his “laws in their mind and write them on their hearts” (Heb 8:10). If he

⁶ VanGemeran expresses it the following: “the Decalogue details how humans must express their love for the Lord and for their neighbour. [...] the Decalogue forms the basis of the other codes, of Moses instructions, and of future judicial decisions.” Bahnsen, *Five Views on Law and Gospel*, 29.

⁷ "By dying on the cross, Christ gave His life as an offering for sin, that through His power man might turn from his sins, be converted, and become a laborer together with God. Greater love than this can never be shown. More could not be done, than that which has been done to demonstrate the immutability of God's law. Christ did not die to abolish the law or to detract in the slightest degree from its influence or power. He died to exalt the law and make it honorable." Ellen Gould Harmon White, “Christ and the Law,” *Ministry*, 2013, 12.

writes his laws on their hearts, the laws are not abolished, but still valid. The result is that He will be their God, and they shall be His people. The change here is that Christ reestablished the old covenant by His blood. He brought into fulfillment what had already been established under the old covenant.⁸

Lev 26:3, 12 used the same phrases for the covenant and showed the same connection between keeping the law and being “your God, and you shall be my people.” The promise of that reestablishment in Christ had been given in Jer 31:31-34.⁹ It found its

⁸ “The expression translated “under the law [ennomos] of Christ” literally means something like “in-lawed to Christ.” In other words, the ultimate will of God is seen only in Christ. Christ in his redemptive deed and word was Paul’s law. It is in harmony with this that Paul says that when we help to heal the fractured lives of others and bear one another’s burdens, we fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1–2). This is the law of self-giving love. Believers are called to serve one another in love (Gal. 5:13). The manifestation of this love in Christ is the fundamental principle of the rule of God. All other commandments, codes, and ethical instructions are subservient to the meaning of love revealed in Christ. These moral principles are understood properly only in connection with his love. To see Christ as the supreme exemplar of the will of God is the heightening of morality, not its diminution. Christ’s love strengthens the will of God. The claim of God in Christ allows no loopholes, as often occurs when morality centers on law. Indeed, Galatians 5:13–14 and Romans 13:8–10 make clear that the whole law, with all its commandments, is fulfilled in the command to love. It is love understood as the self-giving love of Christ, which fulfills the law, or fills it full. It is possible to keep laws, even the Ten Commandments, yet not really love. But it is impossible to love as Christ loved and not to keep the laws of God. Love is the fulfilling of the law, but law is not necessarily the fulfilling of love. We may say that the law defines love, and in part this is true. But on a deeper level, love defines the law and gives it its true meaning. Fulfillment of the law and focus on the law are to be distinguished. The law is only truly fulfilled when the focus is on Christ. To be sure, the law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). To be sure, its righteous requirement is fulfilled in the life of one who walks according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:4), and in the way of love (Gal. 5:13–14; Rom. 13:8–10). Nevertheless, the final rule of behavior for the New Testament Christian is the character and redeeming quality of Jesus’ life and death. This is what gives ultimate expression to the character and will of God. [...] Therefore, while precepts supply guidance, the ultimate pattern for behavior is given in a person rather than a precept. True, for believers the moral laws of scripture, whether embodied in the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, or other ethical statements, continue to function as authoritative sources of guidance and concrete illustrations of what life in Christ involves. But the essence of New Testament teaching on the matter is that only by what God gives do we see with clarity what he requires, and does it become possible to begin fulfilling his requirement.” Blazen, “Christ Our Law,” 14–15.

⁹ Potter explains the expression that the law is written on the heart in Jer 31:31-34 the following: “The sin is also engraved on the tablet, *luah*, of their heart. Of the forty-three occurrences of *luah* in the Old Testament twenty-nine refer to the tablets of the Mosaic Law. The thought of Jeremiah may well have been as follows: as long as the Law is written merely on tablets of stone, so long will sin be written on the tablets of the heart, and so long will forgiveness be impossible. Man’s offerings cannot compensate for his sin. In order for God to forgive he must erase the sin written on the heart and replace it with the Law. The notion of God writing on the heart was in response to what the prophet saw written there already; only so radical an intervention as one by God himself would suffice. The Israelite could not circumcise the foreskin of his

first partial fulfillment in the reestablishment of Judah, its second broader fulfillment in Christ's first appearance and ministry and will find its total fulfillment in the reunion of God and His people at His second coming (Ezek 37:27).¹⁰

The new covenant is an eternal covenant between Christ and His people. This eternal covenant has its beginning in the fulfillment of the old covenant and will last until it finds its peak in the second coming of Christ and will still continue from thereon in eternity. This covenant includes the eternal laws of God which have been existing before the Mosaic covenant. These laws are based on the 'better promise' in Jesus Christ and in the better law that he wrote with his own finger. Every other, temporal, added law in the Mosaic covenant is part of the old covenant. And "speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13).

The thought that Paul is presenting here links the fulfillment of the law with the fulfillment of the old covenant in the new covenant, which is grounded in Jesus Christ. This connection shows that Christ's fulfillment is a change between old, which is earthly, imperfect and ending, with new, which is heavenly, perfect and eternal. Christ lifts the standard of the earthly, Mosaic statutes towards, heavenly eternal laws. It is the same fulfillment as described in Galatians, extended through its link to the salvation plan presented in the sanctuary service.

own heart, nor the Nubian change his skin: God alone could operate on his corrupted creature." Harry Potter, "The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Vetus Testamentum* 33, no. 3 (July 1983): 352.

¹⁰ Kaiser links this text with other OT text's which found their antitypical fulfillment in Christ, while the original prophecy also pointed to a type long before. He argues that the whole context of Jer 31 "connects the new covenant strophe with a literal restoration of the Jewish nation." He goes on in his argument that such restoration develops in the first coming of Christ and will find its peak in the second coming as final fulfillment. Walter C Jr Kaiser, "The Old Promise and the New Covenant: Jeremiah 31:31-34," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 15, no. 1 (1972): 15+21-23.

Everything, the sacrifices, the priestly service, the national statutes have only been “a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (Heb 10:1). They foreshadowed the perfect covenant and the perfect law in Jesus Christ and have therefore been replaced/fulfilled through elevation, when the perfect came.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Three general principles, foundational for all NT interpretations on the fulfillment of the law have been excavated in this study.

The first is based on Jesus teaching in Matt 5:17, which has been supported and extended by other NT books and letters. (1) None of God's laws have ever been abolished, but they have entirely been fulfilled in Christ. Abolishment would mean an interruption or break up of certain laws without completing their purpose. This did not happen. Each law fulfilled its purpose and remained until it achieved what it was supposed to. Such end of a law is not what Jesus denotes as abolishment. It would fall under the category of fulfillment, pointing to laws which found their peak/fullness in Christ, whereby part of them had no more purpose for existence. Such fulfillment is, contrary to abolishment and definitely part of the NT's teachings. Abolishment would proof the law as failure, not able to achieve its goals, while fulfillment elevates the law by its approval of reaching what it was designed for. Jesus approved that God's Law has been victorious in the achievement of its goal. Even though parts of it have not been perfect, due to its human exporters, his entire law remained perfect in reaching its aim.

(2) This fulfillment of the law, which refers to Christ lifting the law in its standard/implementations, has to be approached in two subcategories. Such subdivision in first, the temporal, Mosaic laws and secondly, the eternal laws of God, represents the

second NT interpretational principle of the law. While the temporal laws entirely ended in reaching their fullness through the elevation in Christ and his service, the eternal laws remain valid as they were. Some of those eternal laws Jesus was referring to in his Sermon on the Mount, revealing the original principles of love towards God and Man which underlay them. Even though the eternal laws remain the same, they have been ennobled/fulfilled in their understanding through Christ's teachings and example.

(3) The third principle of interpretation in the NT links the law with the covenant. While the old covenant was based on human, earthly services, the new has its foundation in Christ's heavenly. In relation to it, people under the old covenant lived by the letter, while believers in the new, live by the Spirit. Meaning that while Christ has been represented by written moral, ceremonial and sacrificial practices in the old covenant, he came as a living example of the law and is now represented by the Spirit who arrived as comforter in his stead.

This NT principle of interpreting the OT is based on its approaches to the law through the lenses of the sanctuary system. While the service in the earthly sanctuary was conducted through human deeds and animal blood, the service in heaven is done by Christ through his blood. While people were waiting for the fulfillment of the promises of faith in the old, people live by faith in the fulfilled promises in the new.

The law has been fulfilled in Christ and needs to be regarded spiritually. Meaning that faith in the redeeming power of vicarious services, pointing to Christ and represent him, through: E.g. sacrificial deeds or the keeping of certain festivals in the old covenant, have been replaced by faith in the fulfilled sacrifice through Christ's blood represented by the Spirit, who interacts for man in Christ's stead. The letter, the prior, earthly deputy is thereby fulfilled by the Spirit, the heavenly ambassador of Christ.

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